

VR Portion of WIOA State Plan for Iowa Department for the Blind FY-2018

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 Iowa Department for the Blind is an independent consumer—controlled commission; there is no State Rehabilitation Council.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness

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

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

The Iowa Department for the Blind is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

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

Not applicable.

3. All State plan requirements will apply

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

Not applicable.

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

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

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

The Iowa Department for the Blind cooperates with numerous regional and community agencies and organizations that are not required partners of the statewide Workforce Investment system. Many of these regional and community agencies have entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Workforce Investment partners, including the Department. Cooperative activities include providing and receiving training regarding eligibility and services; making and receiving referrals and providing follow-up; and sharing applicable information regarding mutual clients. In addition, the Department participates in the following efforts:

Governance Group. The Iowa Department for the Blind is a signatory of the Governance Group Memorandum of Agreement. The Governance Group, organized in 1998, includes administrative personnel from the Iowa's Developmental Disability Council, the Office of Persons with Disabilities — Department of Human Rights, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, Workforce Development, Department of Education, Department on Aging and the Department for the Blind. The purpose of the Governance Group is to ensure that partner agencies deliver quality employment services to individuals with disabilities by addressing the barriers to collaborative efforts that their varying policies and procedures can create. Through projects sponsored by this group, Department staff have worked collaboratively with staff from the Veteran's Administration, Iowa's Medicaid Buy-in program known as the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities Program, Iowa's Economic Development Authority, and Social Security's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance grant program.

Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE). The Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) is an initiative to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders that represent all levels of service and interest. The goal of the Coalition is to improve existing state systems so that Iowa youth with disabilities have increased opportunities and resources for fully integrated, competitive employment, regardless of where they live in the state. The Department's Vocational Rehabilitation Program supervisor represents the Department on the Coalition. This effort is funded by a grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

NFB—NEWSLINE. The Department contracts with the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa to make more than 330 local and national newspapers (including the Des Moines Register) available to Iowans through a telephone-based interface with a computerized system. This project provides ready access to local and national job listings, magazines, TV listings, and information from government agencies and

organizations of and for the blind.

Iowa Radio Reading Information Service for the Blind and Print Handicapped (IRIS). The Department partners with IRIS to assist Iowans who cannot access print information. This service allows access to a number of resources including information about career topics, employment opportunities and training events available from newspapers, magazines, and other sources by radio.

National Library Service. The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has a cooperative agreement to serve as a regional library from the National Library Service. The service allows access to print and book materials not available to Iowans who are blind or visually impaired through their local, school, or college libraries.

Interlibrary Loan Programs. The library has cooperative agreement with the State Library of Iowa and Iowa libraries to participate in the statewide Interlibrary Loan program, borrowing and lending books. The library also maintains cooperative agreements with libraries and Instructional Materials Centers around the country to participate in an Interlibrary Loan program, borrowing and lending books.

The Employer's Disability Resource Network (EDRN). This employer development team is a collaborative group of state, federal and local partners who are working together to identify, develop and mobilize resources, supports and services that add value to Iowa businesses hiring persons with disabilities. The EDRN seeks to increase employment of persons with disabilities by pooling agency resources and providing technical expertise to employers throughout the state. Members of this group include staff from the Department, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Iowa Economic Development Authority, U.S. Small Business Administration, Department of Human Rights — Office of Persons with Disabilities and Office of Deaf Services, Iowa Workforce Development, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Easter Seals of Iowa, Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa, Department of Education and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant program. Members of this group have presented and provided resources and assistance to employers and employer organizations throughout the state. In addition, the EDRN provides Iowa employers with access to qualified job applicants and are available to provide employers with information and support related to retaining quality employees who experience a disability.

Institutions of Higher Education. The Department continues the memoranda of understanding (MOU) with Board of Regents institutions of higher education and in the State. This MOU provides for the coordination of services for clients of the Department who are students at one of the universities. It addresses the responsibilities of each party under the laws that address services for each. It states that the Board of Regents Universities is responsible for the provision of reasonable accommodations that allow access to the classroom and university programs, and that the Department is responsible for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The agreement addresses financial responsibilities of the parties and dispute resolution methods. The Department has similar agreements with community colleges within the state.

Ticket to Work. The Department participates in the Ticket to Work program and utilizes the reimbursement process for recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance who are vocational rehabilitation clients seeking employment.

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

IDB is working toward developing a cooperative agreement with state programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. The Iowa Program for Assistive Technology is funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living. IPAT, the statewide assistive technology program for Iowans, is a program of the Center for Disabilities and Development at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. The Easter Seals Iowa Assistive Technology Center receives funding through a grant from the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology, based out of the University of Iowa. This program also has provided information,

referral, and assistive technology for Iowans with disabilities, including Iowan's who are blind or visually impaired.

The Iowa Department for the Blind maintains a team of rehabilitation technology specialists who are trained in blindness and low vision assistive technology and provide training, assessment, and purchasing recommendations. The IDB also has a team of vocational rehabilitation teachers who provide training in the use of blindness and low vision rehabilitation technology as well as other types of disability related skills training to vocational rehabilitation clients across the state. In addition, IDB has independent living rehabilitation teachers who are also trained in assistive technology to assist individuals to meet their independent living needs. IDB partners to provide trainings and events about assistive technology to Iowans who are blind and low vision and to trainers of assistive technology devices. The IDB also partners with IVRS to ensure clients being served have access to information and training on assistive technology.

Currently the IDB is finalizing a formal cooperative agreement with these programs. IDB will continue to refer individuals to the IPAT program and to the Easter Seals Iowa Assistive Technology Center when services needed are outside of the scope of services IDB can provide. IDB will also continue to partner with Easter Seals Iowa Assistive Technology Center to provide devices for youth with disabilities to try when participating in IDB programs. IDB will continue to partner with these programs to provide assistive technology services to clients.

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

The USDA Rural Development office in Iowa administers business-cooperative, housing, and community programs. These programs provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to rural residents and businesses targeting rural communities. These programs are aimed at creating or preserving jobs; promoting a clean rural environment; improving access to decent housing and community facilities; and ensuring essential community facilities are available to rural residents, such as health care clinics, fire and rescue facilities, and more. As part of their technical assistance efforts, the Iowa Rural Development office provides information to disabled Iowans. The Department will provide technical assistance to the Rural Development staff in Iowa as necessary.

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

The Iowa Department for the Blind is working with our Regional Workforce Development Boards and the Iowa Workforce Development Board in the provision of services to out-of-school youth. The IDB refers individuals to Iowa Workforce Development for information regarding benefits planning, labor market information, assessment information, in addition to trainings, assistance with job search activities and a variety of other services available through the local one-stop centers. IDB is working with each region to provide information, training, and technical assistance to our one-stop partners to become accessible to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. IDB will continue to partner with each local one-stop to ensure out-of-school youth who are blind and visually impaired are able to access their services. The IDB is participating in the development and implementation of local and state level agreements with our workforce partners who are serving out-of-school youth.

5. State use contracting programs.

Not Applicable.

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.

Since 2006, the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), the Iowa Braille School (Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired — IESBVI), and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) have been working collaboratively under the Statewide System for Vision Services. This system ensures collaboration in service delivery to children and youth who are blind or visually impaired, including students with the most significant disabilities. Through this system, staff can exchange information about their services and approaches in order to create effective working relationships which will enhance educational and transition outcomes.

IDB vocational rehabilitation counselors collaborate with educators, parents, and other service providers on an ongoing basis, to assure that students who are blind or visually impaired will receive high quality education and rehabilitation services. The IDB collaborates with individuals and entities statewide to provide services that meet the transition needs of students who are blind, deaf—blind, or visually impaired with and without additional disabilities. IDB connects with the IESBVI administrators; the Iowa Department of Education; the ASK Family Resource Center; the Special Education Advisory Panel; the Deaf—Blind Advisory Committee; teachers of the visually impaired (TVI); orientation and mobility specialists (OMS); educators in local school districts and area education agencies; Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and students and their families or guardians.

The Director of the IDB is a standing member of both the Management Team for Blind Services and Leadership Team for Deaf and Blind Services. These committees were formed to facilitate communication and cooperation between the Iowa Department of Education, Area Education Agencies, IESBVI, IDB, and IVRS. The purpose of the Management Team is to provide direction for the development and implementation of work plans and provides oversight in order to maintain and improve the statewide system of educational services for blind and visually impaired and deaf-blind students .

The purpose of the Leadership Team for Deaf and Blind Services is to provide a forum for the Executive and Management Teams to work together to gather information, solve problems, and to provide feedback on work plans, and issues that are of a common interest as well as support collaboration and build cohesion in the statewide system of services for deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired, and deaf-blind students.

The IDB vocational rehabilitation program administrator is a member of the State of Iowa's Special Education Advisory Panel and a vocational rehabilitation counselor participates as a member of the Deaf—Blind Advisory Committee which informs Iowa's Deaf—Blind Project. VR counselors and other IDB staff reach out to TVI's and OMS with a focus of building partnerships and collaboration. The VR counselors connect with TVI's and OMS in group settings, present at IESBVI training events, and communicate on an individual basis with educators.

In addition, VR counselors are active team members at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings at school districts throughout Iowa. IDB counselors provide information about the IDB so that students and their families understand the vocational rehabilitation process and can make informed choices when applying for vocational rehabilitation services and making decisions about training and career options following high school completion.

VR counselors encourage transition—age youth and their families to apply for services as early as age 14 as established by IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act. Once an application is complete, eligibility must be determined. The counselor assists a student in the development of his/her Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) within 90 days of eligibility determination for VR services. VR counselors coordinate with other members of the IEP team to ensure that students participate in work—based learning experiences and paid

work experiences prior to high school graduation. Experiences take place in integrated settings in the community; settings that are in segregated environments are discouraged and avoided.

Ongoing collaboration and communication amongst IDB, IESBVI, local educators, parents, and students are important strengths to the overall transition efforts in Iowa. IDB staff and administrators will continue a process of training educators and service providers about the services the Department provides to students who are blind or visually impaired.

IDB offers a wide range and expanding menu of assistive technology services to transition age youth and educators of transition age youth. IDB technology specialists provide technology assessments and one—on— one assistive technology training to transition age youth at school or at home. IDB staff attend IEP meetings at the request of the team and consult with special education teachers to help them come up with solutions to classroom access barriers.

IDB and IESBVI are working together to provide information and training to K—12 students and their families at annual Spring Vision Conferences. In addition, each entity is providing the other with training. For example, IDB will provide IESBVI staff with training and information about vocational rehabilitation at their annual Summer Institute as well as their annual Fall Vision Conference. IESBVI is providing IDB with training about the educational processes during a quarterly staff in—service meeting.

IDB counseling staff works with Regional Workforce Investment Boards and Transition Advisory Committees to inform them of the program and to develop work experience and career exploration opportunities for the transition students in integrated settings.

Referrals. The commitment to collaboration and partnership resulted in the development of a standard statewide referral procedure. In Iowa, Area Education Agencies (AEAs) coordinate all services for children with disabilities. AEA personnel and local school district personnel participate in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities and in providing the specialized services those students require. Itinerant Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) provide vision—related IEP services to those students who are blind or visually impaired.

TVIs submit completed statewide referral forms for all students, starting as early as age 14 and who are receiving vision—related services. Upon the receipt of a referral form, the IDB referral specialist will follow up with the student and his/her family to gather additional information and will then assign the student to a VR counselor. The counselor will schedule a time to meet with the student and parent(s) or legal guardian to finalize necessary paperwork which is followed by eligibility determination. The next step is to partner with the student to determine his/her goals and develop a plan (IPE — Individual Plan for Employment) identifying the services needed to reach those goals.

The Department coordinates its services with the Iowa Braille School and AEAs to provide seamless transition from school, where all services are provided by the educational agencies (AEAs and local school districts), to vocational rehabilitation.

The Instructional Materials Center (IMC) within the Library serves students in two principal ways. Its primary function is to provide textbooks and educational materials to students from kindergarten through college. Its secondary function is to help students find resources for research projects. Itinerant vision teachers or other school personnel contact the IMC with requests for books for students in grades K—12. The IMC will produce the materials in—house or secure a vendor to produce the needed material. The IMC can provide recorded textbooks and electronic text files to reading disabled students. These requests can be made by students, parents, teachers, or Area Education Agency personnel. College students or vocational trainees may also request course materials from the IMC. Both students and educational staff have access to the library's collection.

The Library has a contract with the Iowa Department of Education to assist Iowa in meeting the NIMAS

(National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards) requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Library provides training to TVIs and other school personnel regarding accessible formats, Braille and use of accessible technology for reading.

Advisory Committee. An IDB VR counselor serves on the Advisory Committee for the Iowa Deafblind Services Project. The committee consists of families, students, consumers, and collaborative partnerships with Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Braille School, Iowa School for the Deaf, Regents Universities, and Deaf Services Commission. The committee was established to meet the needs of deaf—blind children by providing assistance via training efforts and by providing information on research and practices for the purpose of educating deaf/blind individuals from birth through age 21.

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). The Department's transition specialist serves on the Special Education Advisory Panel, which discusses outcomes and policies related to students and youth in special education, including students in transition. The purpose of IDB involvement is to connect with schools and providers for transition, provide guidance on policy development and strategies for student outcomes, while also providing information that impacts the most significantly disabled students/youth as it pertains to Section 511 of WIOA.

Expanded Core Curriculum. In 2008, the state legislature passed and the Governor signed into law a core curriculum for educating students in Iowa. The Core Curriculum defines essential concepts and skills that K—12 students should learn. An Expanded Core Curriculum was included in this legislation for students with disabilities. The Expanded Core Curriculum is not an alternative to the Core Curriculum. Instead, the Expanded Core Curriculum identifies additional concepts and skill sets that students with disabilities must be taught in conjunction with the Core Curriculum. These additional areas are accessing assistive technology, career education, compensatory skills, independent living skills, orientation and mobility skills, recreation and leisure skills, self—determination skills, social interaction skills, and visual efficiency skills.

Several of the IDB transition programs are designed to support the student's IEP with regard to the Expanded Core Curriculum. For example, a summer program for transition clients focuses on developing assistive technology proficiency, independent mobility, daily living skills, and soft skills such as appropriate communication and appearance for the workplace. Students who are blind or have low vision also have the opportunity to participate in specialized IDB programs for children and youth. IDB collaborates with educators to develop programs based on the needs of clients.

IDB—Sponsored Programs. The Iowa Department for the Blind LEAP Program is dedicated to providing meaningful and high quality vocational rehabilitation services to blind and low vision transition—age youth from across the state. The Program provides many opportunities for blind and low vision Iowa youth to develop the confidence and skills necessary for seamless transitions to life after high school. The focus of LEAP is to motivate and assist youth in high school to: learn skills for independence and workplace readiness; explore careers and educational opportunities; learn to advocate and take charge of their future, and; prepare for the future through work—based learning experiences in integrated settings.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires IDB and other vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide five Pre—Employment Transition Services. The services include: job exploration counseling, work—based learning and work experiences in competitive integrated employment, counseling on post—secondary educational opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self—advocacy. Services are provided. The expected outcome of all IDB sponsored programs is employment in integrated competitive employment. The pre—employment transition services were the basis for the development of the IDB LEAP concept.

The Summer LEAP Academy is an eight week residential program that provides training to blind and low vision high school students in independent living skills and specific non—visual techniques in the areas of technology, cane travel, Braille and other communication, home management and industrial arts. There is a focus on self—advocacy and other life skills as well as job readiness and career—related topics. In addition

to the classes, students participate in fun and challenging activities to develop positive attitudes about blindness and vision loss and equip them with the confidence to believe in themselves and their abilities.

IDB LEAP Weekend Retreats (Friday evenings through Sunday afternoons) are offered at least five times per school year. Blind and low vision high school students from across Iowa participate in the theme—based retreats and work on building disability—related skills as well as skills in areas such as job readiness, job interviewing, communication, orientation and mobility, technology, team—work, time—management, social behavior, advocacy, peer interaction, problem solving, etc. The retreats also provide a means for students to step out of their comfort zones to increase confidence and positive attitudes about blindness.

The Braille Challenge is an annual event sponsored by the IDB and IESBVI, provides opportunities for students in grades 1 to 12 to test their Braille skills in reading, writing, spelling and comprehension. Top finishers in the various age brackets advance to other competitions. The Challenge brings students and families together from across the state of Iowa where new connections and friends are made every year. The competition inspires many blind and low vision students to work to improve their Braille skills. Program staff take this opportunity to provide outreach and training to parents, students, and support systems about the importance of students developing workplace readiness, self—advocacy and blindness skills.

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

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

The Department has a formal interagency agreement with the Iowa Department of Education (DE). Through this agreement, the DE and the IDB agree to collaborate in providing:

- Consultation and technical assistance to assist local education agencies (LEAs) and area education agencies (AEAs) in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services.
- Support for transition planning provided by LEAs, AEAs, and the IDB for students with disabilities including the development and completion of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDB staff will develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE) for each IDB eligible individual prior to the individual's graduation. The individual, parents, educators and IDB staff will collaborate so that the goals of the IEP and the IPE will be consistent with each other. The individual's preferences, interests and skills will serve as the basis of employment goals.
- Coordination to ensure that transition services are provided by qualified personnel as defined in Iowa Administrative Code 281—41.8(256B,34CFR300), Iowa Administrative Code 111—2.1(216(B)), and other relevant state requirements.
- Support for early outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services. Outreach efforts will include a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. The DE will assist in the dissemination of written materials developed by IDB. Outreach to students who are blind or visually impaired should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process. The Department will continue to review and revise the agreement with the Iowa Department of Education to develop procedures and mechanisms to meet the needs of students who are blind and visually impaired.

All of the Iowa Department for the Blind's programs for students who are blind or visually impaired, including students who are deaf-blind and those who have the most significant disabilities, continue to be reviewed in efforts to meet the needs of current clients and potentially eligible individuals. Programs are designed so that all youth who want to attend are able to attend, including providing necessary supports to allow equal opportunity and engagement in activities.

The Department has reviewed and is adjusting the service delivery system to allocate 15 percent of the

federal allotment for the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities prior to exit from secondary education. The Department is working to develop a mechanism to track the provision, coordination, arrangement and purchase of pre-employment transition services provided by the Iowa Department for the Blind.

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

VR counselors encourage transition-age youth and their families to apply for services as early as age 14 as established by IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act. Once an application is complete, eligibility must be determined. The counselor assists a student in the development of his/her Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) within 90 days of eligibility determination for VR services. VR counselors coordinate with other members of the IEP team to ensure that students participate in work-based learning experiences and paid work experiences prior to high school graduation. Experiences take place in integrated settings in the community; settings that are in segregated environments are discouraged and avoided.

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 Iowa Department of Education, hereafter referred to as DE, and the Iowa Department for the Blind, hereafter referred to as IDB, for the purpose of implementing the requirements of 34CFR 361.22(b), enter into the following interagency agreement. The DE and the IDB are designated state lead agencies in executing the provisions of this agreement.

The DE and the IDB agree to collaborate in providing:

Consultation and technical assistance to assist local education agencies (LEAs) and area education agencies (AEAs) in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services.

Support for transition planning provided by LEAs, AEAs, and the IDB for students with disabilities including the development and completion of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDB staff will develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE) for each IDB eligible individual prior to the individual's graduation. The individual, parents, educators and IDB staff will collaborate so that the goals of the IEP and the IPE will be consistent with each other. The individual's preferences, interests and skills will serve as the basis of employment goals.

Coordination to ensure that transition services are provided by qualified personnel as defined Iowa Administrative Code 281—41.8(256B,34CFR300), Iowa Administrative Code 111—2.1(216(B)), and other relevant state requirements.

Support for early outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services. Outreach efforts will include a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. The DE will assist in the dissemination of written materials developed by IDB. Outreach to students who are blind or visually impaired should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process.

Financial responsibilities. The DE and IDB shall be responsible for the costs they incur in carrying out this agreement. The IDB agrees to provide for the costs of materials describing available IDB programs and services.

Amendment. This agreement may be amended in writing upon mutual consent of the DE and the IDB.

Term of the agreement. This agreement is effective upon execution by the DE and the IDB and shall remain in effect until it is terminated by either party upon written thirty (30) day notice to the other party.

The Iowa Department for the Blind and the Iowa Department of Education are working to revise the current agreement to more fully define the roles and responsibilities of each agency.

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

Provided in Section A.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

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

The Department does not have long-term cooperative agreements in place with private non-profit VR service providers. However, the Department has utilized such entities on a case-by-case basis. For instance, BLIND, Inc. in Minneapolis, MN and the Colorado Center for the Blind in Littleton, CO have provided orientation and adjustment training and job search services to our clients. While the Department has its own Orientation Center, the needs of some clients may be better addressed at an alternative center; this decision is based on client informed choice.

Because the number of blind and visually impaired Iowans who utilize services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) is both small and widely dispersed, the Department collaborates with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to define potential services, outcomes, and costs. By working together, the Department and IVRS ensure that CRPs receive consistent information and direction from the VR agencies in Iowa. IDB works collaboratively with CRPs when the service is necessary for the client to meet their training and employment goals. Agreements entered into with any organization will require that assessment and career development activities occur in integrated work settings in the community.

In these cases, agreements are developed with the identified CRP to deliver the necessary service. The client and VR Counselor may identify a private provider that best addresses his or her specific VR needs. In these instances, the Counselor issues an authorization for the services. The provider is required to submit periodic reports on progress to the Counselor. The Counselor may continue to authorize for services until the services have been completed, the provider demonstrates progress is not being made, or the client finds that services are not addressing needs. Evidence of these arrangements can be found in individual case files.

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.

Because the number of blind and visually impaired Iowans who utilize services from Community Rehabilitation Programs is both small and widely dispersed, the Department collaborates with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to define supported employment services, outcomes, and costs. The Department enters into cooperative agreements with providers of supported employment when specific clients are identified as needing those services. When appropriate, supported employment services and extended services are paid for through county services under the Medicaid Waiver programs. By working

together, the Department and IVRS ensure that CRPs receive consistent information and direction from the VR agencies in Iowa.

The Department may also make arrangements with other private entities to provide supported employment and extended services as the need arises. Other private entities may include employers, family members, and individuals contracted to provide these services. Natural supports and county services are the most often used services for extended support services.

The Department is adjusting the service delivery system to allocate 50 percent of the supported employment grant allotment for the provision of pre-employment transition services to youth with the most significant disabilities. In addition, these funds may be used to provide extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of up to four years.

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

It is IDB's goal to have an expansive number of employer relationships throughout the state of Iowa in order to increase our ability to provide quality career development, job search and job placement services to our clients. Through the successful development and management of employer relationships, IDB is better able to meet the employment needs of our clients. IDB focuses attention on strategic employer development in order to provide services and benefit to both employers and IDB clients. The IDB employs three Employment Specialists whose primary customers are employers within their areas of coverage. Employment Specialist's key role is to engage employers and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships through strategic employer development. IDB recognizes that high quality relationships will increase effectiveness at assisting clients in reaching their employment goals while at the same time meet the needs of employers. Employment Specialists develop and deliver services that are based upon the various identified needs of businesses including: applicant screening and assessment, job analyses, job accommodations, and on-the-job training plans. In addition, delivering diversity awareness trainings and interpreting and explaining policies, rules, regulations, and laws. In particular, Employment Specialist provide assistance in addressing employers' needs through compliance in meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 503 and other workplace requirements, employer incentives and worksite modifications; these services are specifically designed to support business growth and increase employment opportunity for persons with disabilities, including persons with the most significant disabilities. Employment Specialists and other VR staff are engaged with the WIOA state and local boards, are members of employer groups, and participate in business networking and human resource organizations as available in their area.

The Department Rehabilitation Technology Specialists provide systems evaluation and equipment setup services for organizations such as Nationwide Insurance, Unity Point, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and CenturyLink. We work with clients at the job site and assist during onboarding training sessions. Specialists are able to demonstrate assistive technology, answer questions related to blindness and assistive technology, and provide resources and information to assist the employer in meeting their business needs.

The library provides services to employers by producing accessible materials needed by employers for staff, new employees, and the public. The library also provides training to community public libraries to assist in serving those within their communities who need accessible materials and information.

Through participation in the Employer's Disability Resource Network (EDRN), Employment Specialists work collaboratively with other state, federal and community partners to identify, develop, and mobilize

resources, supports and services that add value to Iowa businesses hiring and retaining persons with disabilities. The EDRN has implemented a bi-annual employer's summit, which is a round-table discussion with business and community partners to discuss successes and challenges related to hiring individuals with disabilities. The businesses and partners who attend decide on the topics and are able to engage in open discussions of the issues and opportunities each of their organizations face in hiring individuals with disabilities.

Employment Specialists connect with employers on a national level through involvement in the National Employment Team (NET). Participation in NET allows Employment Specialists to learn about employment opportunities and career development resources, in addition to addressing employer hiring needs, providing information regarding disability awareness, retention assistance, accommodations, and other support services.

IDB and several partner agencies including Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Iowa Workforce Development, community rehabilitation partners and employers have worked together in multiple regions in Iowa to implement Reverse Job Fairs. This type of fair is a unique process that allows the job seeker to receive assistance in creating a strength-based presentation and a format to deliver it directly to employers. The fair is unique in that it is a combination of three events: the first is a workshop in which candidates go through various stations to learn job seeking skills such as presentation, introductions, interviewing, resume and application, in addition to creating a display to showcase their talents; the second is a rehearsal where clients have a chance to practice their presentation with employers and providers; the final day is the Reverse Job Fair in which clients are able to give their presentation to the employers who are walking among the displays. These events have resulted in successes for clients which include increase in confidence, offers to participate in interviews and job hires.

Employers and hiring staff are invited to tour the Iowa Department for the Blind; having the opportunity to learn about the resources available, understand the capabilities of persons who are blind, and see demonstrations of potential accommodations and techniques a person who is blind may use in an employment setting. The Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center provides prevocational, nonvisual adjustment-to-blindness training to vocational rehabilitation clients. Students participating in this training learn nonvisual techniques, develop a positive attitude about blindness, and build self-confidence. Through tours given by center students, employers see the techniques blind people use for traveling with the long, white cane, taking and reading Braille notes, using computers with speech, cooking, and operating power tools, in addition to being able to ask questions about blindness. Students also participate in a jobs class where they work toward their chosen careers, which can include informational interviewing, job shadowing, submitting applications for employment, determining accommodations for a job and networking with employers in the community. The BEP works with eligible individuals who are interested in self-employment to manage their own businesses -- operating vending machines, road side vending sites, and/or snack bar/catering services. Entrepreneurs are provided with a considerable amount of training before they manage a business. This is supplemented by ongoing training to promote independent entrepreneurship in all business areas including hiring and managing employees, inventory control, ordering, pricing, scheduling, maintaining and repairing equipment, payroll, and business accounting. The IDB partners with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) on the Iowa Self Employment program which is available to clients of both agencies. The program assists individuals to explore the option of becoming self-sufficient through the self-employment. Business Development Specialists provide technical assistance to clients to assist them in reaching this goal if determined appropriate. Through the program, clients can access Iowa Economic Development, Iowa Small Business Development Centers, Iowa Job Centers and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the Iowa Workforce Development to gain additional training or assistance in developing their business plans. The Department encourages and assists clients to develop connections and mentors with other individuals, including individuals who are blind or visually impaired, who have established successful businesses.

2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services,

for students and youth with disabilities.

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) is dedicated to providing high quality vocational rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired youth across the state of Iowa. Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, are necessary to the successful employment of students and youth who are blind. IDB emphasizes the need for students and youth who are blind to build and strengthen skills in alternative techniques, assistive technology, disability related skills training, work readiness skills, and self-advocacy skills. The IDB strongly believes that quality training and increasing independence and confidence, is essential to the success of transition aged youth in post-secondary environments. The Department begins working with students at the age of 14 to provide necessary services. An essential goal is for all transition students to have paid work experience in competitive integrated employment prior to graduating high school. In an effort to meet this goal, IDB works with employers to align job training programs and work-based learning experiences, in addition to assisting with necessary accommodations. Employment Specialists focus on developing relationships with employers for the purpose of creating work experience opportunities, including on-the-job trainings, internships, and paid work experiences. These relationships are also beneficial in providing employers with an understanding and experience of hiring individuals who are blind.

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides pre-employment transition services to youth by facilitating opportunities for job shadowing, work experience, work assessment and on-the-job training.

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 Iowa Department for the Blind is dedicated to assisting clients to achieve competitive integrated employment. The Department will continue to explore potential for cooperation and collaboration with the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act. The Department collaborates to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals with developmental disabilities in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired. Other mental health services are provided statewide by various entities. Department counselors cooperate with those providers to ensure that mutual clients, or persons who may need both VR and mental health services, are adequately and appropriately served. A Memorandum of Agreement with the Governance Group (eight state agencies which includes the State Medicaid/Mental Health Division and the Executive Director of the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council) collaborated to support strategies to reduce duplication and maximize employment efforts with a clear focus on competitive, community integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Department of Human Services (DHS) that administers the title XIX program of the Social Security Act, and who has the primary state level responsibility for overseeing the mental health services in Iowa have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU describes the financial responsibilities and the populations that are served to maximize resources and avoid duplication.

The goal of the Governance Group is to strengthen employment services for Iowans with disabilities, including Iowans with the most significant disabilities. To accomplish this goal, collaboration and coordination of career and employment services must occur among the partners and among their local offices in support of community-based integrated employment. The following are the strategies the IDB and other partners are implementing to meet the goal. The IDB works with other Operations Team members to identify and assess barriers to collaboration at all levels of service delivery. The IDB maintains communication among state and local offices to solicit state-level and local input on collaboration issues. The partners continue to solicit information and recommendations from local offices and from Partners at the State level about policies and procedures that hinder collaboration or cause systemic barriers to eligibility standards,

information dissemination, funding streams, reimbursement rates, or data collection and measurements. When appropriate, the Partners develop new guidelines to be shared at the local levels. The IDB also works with Partners to resolve collaboration issues, promote innovative policies, procedures, and practices in service delivery and communicate those to local partners. The partners have determined that the indicator of success is the increased inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforces of local communities. In a data snapshot of Partner agencies, there was an increase in community employment. The Partners will continue to review this information and revise the measures as we move forward with WIOA. The Partners also recognized in 2014, that there are 110,000 Iowan's who might benefit from SSA disability benefits planning services. Some of these individuals are served by a variety of agencies. The Department for the Blind is focused on services being provided in the community, in integrated and competitive environments. Due to the state's shift of services from facility-based to community-based placements, there will be a need for increased individuals needing benefits planning. Partner agencies have begun to determine the feasibility of establishing a benefits planning network that will identify approved training opportunities for Iowa benefits planners, to provide technical assistance to trainers, and to develop referral processes for SSA recipients not currently connected to the service delivery system. The Department for the Blind participates in activities with other Partner agencies to cooperate as well as involve community partners, families and education in implementing an Employment First approach. The Department of Human Services and IDB have not developed a formal agreement at this time. IDB has taken steps to reach out to DHS partners to begin the development of a formal agreement to establish collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. The IDB has also worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to develop an agreement to identify collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. Both agencies agree to share resources, discuss strategies, provide training and technical assistance and provide referral and information services, while also coordinating cases that are shared between the two agencies.

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

The Department collaborates to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals with developmental disabilities in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired. Other mental health services are provided statewide by various entities. Department counselors cooperate with those providers to ensure that mutual clients, or persons who may need both VR and mental health services, are adequately and appropriately served.

A Memorandum of Agreement with the Governance Group (eight state agencies which includes the State Medicaid/Mental Health Division and the Executive Director of the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council) collaborated to support strategies to reduce duplication and maximize employment efforts with a clear focus on competitive, community integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Department of Human Services (DHS) that administers the title XIX program of the Social Security Act, and who has the primary state level responsibility for overseeing the mental health services in Iowa have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU describes the financial responsibilities and the populations that are served to maximize resources and avoid duplication.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and IDB have not developed a separate formal agreement at this time. IDB has taken steps to reach out to DHS partners to begin the development of a formal agreement to establish collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. The IDB has also worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to develop an agreement to identify collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. Both agencies agree to share resources, discuss strategies, provide training and technical assistance and provide referral and information services, while also coordinating cases that are shared between the two agencies.

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

The Department collaborates to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired and require mental health services. Mental health services are provided statewide by various entities. Department counselors cooperate with those providers to ensure that mutual clients, or persons who may need both VR and mental health services, are adequately and appropriately served.

A Memorandum of Agreement with the Governance Group (eight state agencies which includes the State Medicaid/Mental Health Division and the Executive Director of the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council) collaborated to support strategies to reduce duplication and maximize employment efforts with a clear focus on competitive, community integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Department of Human Services (DHS) that administers the title XIX program of the Social Security Act, and who has the primary state level responsibility for overseeing the mental health services in Iowa have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU describes the financial responsibilities and the populations that are served to maximize resources and avoid duplication.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and IDB have not developed a separate formal agreement at this time. IDB has taken steps to reach out to DHS partners to begin the development of a formal agreement to establish collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. The IDB has also worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to develop an agreement to identify collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. Both agencies agree to share resources, discuss strategies, provide training and technical assistance and provide referral and information services, while also coordinating cases that are shared between the two agencies.

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 Iowa Department for the Blind has in place a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ascertain and meet the training needs of its professional and paraprofessional staff, as well as new employees. The Iowa Department for the Blind management staff collects and compiles data to review personnel needs and to plan training and development activities for all staff. Managers review monthly reports that identify caseload activity related to referrals, applications, services, cases open and closed, and employer contacts. Managers also have access to several automated reports generated by the Department's case management system to review cases, pending referral and interview activities, and progress toward agency goals. Management staff use these reports to predict caseload activity and personnel needs. By rule, all employees are to receive an annual performance evaluation from their supervisor. Training needs are discussed then, and the employee is encouraged to offer recommendations and address concerns. All new employees must go through training in the orientation center for the blind. Employees develop non-visual skills that their clients will need and use for employment and independence. However, more importantly, this

training addresses the misconceptions held by most of society to raise the expectations of blind people and provides an understanding of the positive attitude about blindness that governs the entire agency. The Department regularly provides the opportunity for staff to express needs for training and development opportunities. Responses identified needs for training related on a broad range of topics, including training related to meeting the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, the use of labor market information, working with youth, and business engagement. IDB will continue to assess the needs of staff and provide training to ensure that the needs of clients are met. Direct vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are provided by the field operations unit and by the adult orientation and adjustment center. Staffing in these two areas is as follows: Field operations: three supervisors, ten vocational rehabilitation counselors, two employment specialists, eight rehabilitation teachers, four rehabilitation technology specialists, and four support personnel. Adult orientation and adjustment center: one program administrator and six orientation center teachers. In addition to the field operations and orientation center staff the library has 11 employees who provide prevocational, educational, and vocational materials or services to clients. The Department's Randolph-Sheppard program has two employees to administer the business enterprises program. The Department processed 181 new applications in 2017 and served 452 eligible individuals. The ratio of all field operations and orientation center staff to individuals served is 38 to 452 or approximately one to 12. The ratio of vocational rehabilitation counselors to individuals served is 10 to 452, or approximately one to 45. A total of three field operations and orientation center staff will meet retirement eligibility criteria in the next five years. Replacement of departing staff is consistent with expected staffing needs for the next five years. Row Job Title Total positions Current vacancies Projected vacancies over the next 5 years: 1 Supervisors 3 0 0; 2 vocational rehabilitation counselors 10 1 0; 3 rehabilitation teachers 10 2 2; 5 employment specialist 2 1 0; 6 rehabilitation technology specialists 4 1 0; 7 support personnel 4 2 0; 8 orientation center program administrator 1 0 0; 9 orientation center teachers 6 1 1.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Refer to Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development A. Qualified Personnel Needs. section i.

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.

Refer to Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development A. Qualified Personnel Needs. section i.

B. Personnel Development

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

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

The University of Iowa and Drake University offer graduate degree programs in vocational rehabilitation counseling rehabilitation administration. Both programs offer graduates the ability to work in the field of rehabilitation counseling and/or in mental health counseling. The following is a table that represents the 2015/2016 academic year: Row Institutions Students enrolled Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA Graduates from the previous year 1 University of Iowa (MA) Rehabilitation Counseling 23 0 7 13 (5 RSA-sponsored) 2 Drake University; (M.S.) Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Administration 36 0 21 14 (13 RSA-sponsored)

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel Recent hires are participating in the

Department's certification process as defined in subrule 111-2.1(2) of the Iowa Administrative Code. All remaining staff, including all VR counselors, meet the highest requirements in the state applicable to their profession. No significant factors exist which adversely affect the Department's ability to hire qualified staff. Therefore, no short-term or long-term strategies are necessary to address such factors. Because all Department staff already meet the highest standards in the state, no funding is necessary to implement a retraining plan. The agency actively works with the two Rehabilitation Counseling programs in Iowa and recruits from graduate programs and through a variety of list serves to reach qualified personnel. During the past year, IDB supervised practicum and intern students in the Rehabilitation Counseling programs to provide them with field work exposure to the state rehabilitation agency. In an attempt to address the recruitment of personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities, hiring practices to assure consideration of applicants from diverse backgrounds, IDB actively attempts to recruit from a wide variety of sources including the Iowa State hiring system, Iowa Workforce Development, various list serves, and through local, state and national consumer organizations. Communication with staff continues on the importance of working with our diverse client basis from a service delivery perspective, but also from a staff recruiting basis. The screening process is equitable to all applicants. Screening is done through the use of a rubric and the top scoring applicants are interviewed. Applicants are selected from the top scorers. Specific consultation has occurred with our Iowa Department of Administrative Services in efforts to expand recruitment from non-traditional sources.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

Refer to Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development B. Personnel Development, section i.

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.

Refer to Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development B. Personnel Development, section i.

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 Department's plan for recruitment and training of qualified personnel is based on the highest standards in the state for VR counselors. The Department actively recruits persons who are blind or disabled, and persons from minority backgrounds. Recruitment efforts include: • Employment announcements are posted on Iowa's state employment opportunities web site. Exceptions can occur with regard to steps required by the collective bargaining agreement or in the event the position is merit exempt. • Promotion of experienced and qualified personnel from within the agency, including personnel who are blind. • Participation in internship opportunities for students of rehabilitation counseling and placement. The Department's plan for retention of qualified personnel includes ongoing training opportunities for all staff; provision and support of assistive technology for staff who are blind or disabled; encouragement and support for personnel desiring advanced degrees; and opportunities for advancement within the organization. The Department does not discriminate in any way in its recruitment and hiring practices or in its administration and supervision practices against individuals who are from minority backgrounds or who have disabilities.

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

In accordance with 34 CFR 361.18(c) of the Act, the Department for the Blind has defined and implemented personnel standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors based on state approved and recognized certification requirements promulgated under the Iowa Administrative Procedure Act. The following standards for VR counselors are based on the highest entry-level degree needed under the existing state certification requirements codified in subrule 111-2.1, Iowa Administrative Code: 2.1(2) Service specialist for the blind 2 and senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor). Certification shall be required of all vocational rehabilitation counselors employed by the Department. a. At the time of hire into the position, an individual holding at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and one year of work experience shall be granted provisional certification. Exceptions regarding education and experience can only be made by the Commission for the Blind upon the recommendation of the director. Provisional certification shall be recognized for a maximum period of 18 months. b. An individual may obtain full certification as a vocational rehabilitation counselor by demonstrating competency in the following areas. 1. Knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the Department's positive philosophy of blindness. 2. Knowledge of the Department's programs. 3. Skills in career planning and development. 4. Knowledge of placement techniques and practices. 5. Knowledge of occupational information, job site evaluation, and job analysis. 6. Knowledge and development of alternative techniques of blindness. 7. Knowledge of rehabilitation technology services. 8. Knowledge of disability and related issues. 9. Advocacy. 10. Case management. 11. Adjustment to blindness counseling. 12. Assessment of consumer needs. 13. Public education and outreach. 14. Teamwork and problem solving. c. An individual holding at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, who has been employed by the Department as a service specialist for the blind 2 or senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor) for a minimum of six months on the date this rule is finalized, shall be considered to be a fully certified vocational rehabilitation counselor, as long as the individual maintains unbroken employment with the Department in that classification. These standards, which are the highest in the state, ensure that the professional personnel needed within the Department to carry out the vocational rehabilitation program are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. All of the professional staff at the Department meet, or are working toward meeting, these standards. To maintain standards, personnel must participate in ongoing training through the Department.

Plan to Retrain or Hire Personnel to Meet Standards: Evaluation of recruitment practices is based on the Department's ability to hire and train qualified personnel. These practices will continue to be evaluated as additional hiring becomes necessary. Since all staff currently meet the highest standards within the state, no retraining program is in place. As a general practice, the Department does not hire individuals who do not meet the established personnel standards for the services specialist for the blind 2 or senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor) positions. In the event an individual is hired who does not meet the Department's personnel standards that individual would be expected to meet those standards within an established time period. The Department would devise a schedule by which the individual must report on progress and by which time period he or she must meet the standards. Failure to meet the standards within the established time period would result in termination or reassignment.

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.

Refer to previous sections.

4. Staff Development.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. System of staff development

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

The Department actively assesses the training needs of all employees. The employee performance evaluation document is used to review an employee's performance and to identify training needs.

In addition to annual individual performance reviews, the Department surveys the staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively.

All new employees of the agency participate in 30 hours of small group classes featuring presentations from consumer organizations, program administrators, and Commission Board members as well as discussion of agency mission, vision and values and information about agency structure and history.

In order to ensure that direct service VR staff are in touch with the needs and concerns of the people they serve, all VR counselors, employment specialists, IL teachers, VR teachers, Orientation Center teachers, Rehabilitation Technology Specialists, supervisors, and the agency director are required to complete the following continuing education requirements on an annual basis:

- * attend and actively participate in at least 5 blindness discussion groups held in the orientation center
- * Attend at least one meeting of each consumer group. This can be a local chapter or state convention
- * Attend at least one meeting of a local support group.
- * lead a blindness issue discussion with his/her supervisor in attendance

In order to ensure that clients are receiving high quality blindness skills training and instructors have up-to-date knowledge concerning best practices for blindness rehabilitation teaching, all field and center teachers must re-complete the performance-based requirements established for new instructors every five years.

Vocational rehabilitation employees have participated in the following training activities:

- Quarterly in—service training activities focus on improving knowledge and understanding of rehabilitation topics, development and demonstration of new skill levels and organizational change projects that enhance achievement of employment outcomes for blind individuals.
- Performance and Development Solutions (PDS) courses are provided by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services / Human Resources Enterprise on a wide range of general topics and transferable job skills.
- In—house training in classroom settings and one—on—one is made available to all employees depending

upon the need. Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through personnel development seminars available to staff including management certifications and continuous quality improvement certification courses. All management employees have attended, are currently attending, or are will be attending the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute. Employees are encouraged to participate in professional organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind in leadership roles.

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.

Employees acquire information about current research by participating in professional conferences, attending training on a variety of topics, and through professional publications, such as the Journal of Rehabilitation, the Journal of Visual Impairments and Blindness, and Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) publications. Employees are asked to submit reports on conference findings to the Department's training grant administrator and their supervisor. These reports include summaries of significant issues or findings, assessments of the conference's information to their work, and an evaluation of the value of conference to other staff. Further, employees who have attended conferences or training sessions provide updates on results of research or new information to others at the in—service meetings.

5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

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

The Department uses outside interpreters for individuals who are not proficient in English or who use sign language. Employees are routinely counseled on how to locate qualified interpreters. Independent contracts are established as needed to obtain services from 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. Contracts have included, but are not limited to American Sign Language, including Tactile Signing for Deaf—Blind individuals, Spanish, Vietnamese, Burmese, Swahili and others according to the needs of applicants and eligible individuals. The Department maintains a contract with Deaf Services Unlimited to provide communication services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Braille is an integral part of the training that all professional personnel receive.

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.

The Department pursues the following activities to coordinate the system of personnel development with personnel development activities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): • Maintains an interagency agreement with the Iowa Department of Education (DE) which defines the roles and responsibilities of both agencies regarding transition activities. (see attachment 4.8(b)(2)). • The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), the Iowa Braille School, and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) work collaboratively under the Statewide System for Vision Services. This system ensures collaboration in service delivery to children and youth who are blind or visually impaired. Under this system, employees exchange

information about their services and approaches in order to create effective working relationships. A standard referral procedure was developed as a result of this collaboration. Area education agencies (AEAs) personnel and local school district personnel participate in developing individual education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities and in providing the specialized services those students require. Itinerant teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) provide vision—related IEP services to those students who are blind or visually impaired. The TVI must refer all students who are receiving vision—related services to one of two statewide vision system’s regional directors prior to the development of the student’s transition IEP or no later than age fourteen. Through this collaborative effort and referral system, the Department is able to effectively coordinate its services with the Iowa Braille School and the AEAs to provide seamless transition from school, where all services are provided by the educational agencies (AEAs and local school districts), to vocational rehabilitation.

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;

Through the American Community Survey (ACS), the prevalence of disability in Iowa can be compared with national data. Iowa demonstrates lower prevalence of disability, including blindness and visual impairment across all ages. Regarding the 2014 ACS, 11.37% Iowans reported having a disability, compared to 12.64% nationally. The age range for reported disability also was lower than national averages. This pattern held for people who reported visual disabilities in Iowa, where 5.01% of all Iowans reported having a visual disability (versus 6.68% nationally), and 14.59% of all people with disabilities reporting a visual disability (versus 18.52% nationally).

When considering the population of people with the most significant disabilities and most likely to benefit from supported employment, the best source of secondary data available is that which derives from the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA reported that, in 2014, 10.40% of working age Iowans said they had a disability. Of these respondents, 42.95% indicated they were employed (as compared with 83.45% of respondents who did not have disabilities). Among people SSA identified as having a visual disability, 51.04% reported being employed.

SSA also identified those people who were working age and were receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits. Among all working age Iowans with disabilities, 18.27% were receiving benefits, of whom 2.17% of the total recipients were blind or visually impaired. Of the total recipients, 69.93% were working age individuals with disabilities, and 2.33% of working age disability recipients were individuals who were blind or visually impaired.

The working age individuals who are receiving disability benefits are the individuals who can most readily be described as those with the most significant disabilities and most likely to benefit from supported employment. Given SSA numbers, this means there are 35,824 working age individuals with disabilities in Iowa, of whom 836 are blind or visually impaired.

If the number of individuals considered most significantly disabled is expanded to include all blind or visually impaired individuals who are 64 or younger, the number increases to 1,042. This would include anyone under the age of 18. Data collection for age cohorts is projected to be modified for upcoming surveys to address changes in legislation regarding transition.

Demographic data, informant interviews and survey responses identified a need to provide increased supports to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including individuals who are deaf—blind and those with multiple disabilities and barriers to employment. Needs for people with the most significant disabilities were identified in the area of pre—employment transition services, assistive technology services, training in Braille, keyboarding, technology, home and personal management, orientation and mobility, advocacy and adjustment to blindness counseling. Client and counselor survey data also identified the need for more career exploration and work experience opportunities for students and youth with the most significant disabilities. The Department will build a network of qualified rehabilitation teachers throughout the state and work with CRPs, IWD, IVRS, and other core partners to improve training and services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

B. who are minorities;

To assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within Iowa who are minorities the following activities were completed: Comparisons were made between the representations of minorities in Iowa to the representation of minorities in the Department’s closure data. Employment outcome measures comparing minority clients to non—minority clients were also reviewed. As the following table shows, the Department’s client population is somewhat more diverse than Iowa’s population. Table 1: Representation by Race/Ethnicity — Iowa & Dept. for the Blind Race / Ethnicity Iowa’s Population Case Closures (FY2011—2015) Percentages Case Closures (FY2011—2015) Counts

Race/Ethnicity	Iowa’s Population (%)	Case Closures (%)	Counts
White	91.3%	86.43%	586
Black/African American	2.9%	8.55%	58
Hispanic or Latino	5%	2.06%	14
Asian	1.7%	1.47%	10
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%	0.15%	1

As the percentages above show, the Department’s four—year closure data indicates an under—representation of Hispanics given Iowa’s population. Closure data also shows over—representation among African American Iowans. Establishing employment trend data for minorities who have applied for VR services from the Department is made difficult by the small numbers they represent in the caseload. For example, while clients of Hispanic or Latino origin make up 2.06 percent of the case closures, the total number of these clients closed in four years is 14. With such a small population, the slightest change in numbers can cause a significant change to percentages. To obtain trend data, staff aggregated the minority closures into one group. Therefore, employment trend data was examined by comparing the non—minority population (White) to the minority population (Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, and American Indian). In addition, trend data was established using four years of closure data (FY2011—2015). The total number of minority cases closed is 83; the total number of non—minority cases closed is 586. The rate of employment after services for non—minority clients is 80.07 percent compared to 73.56 percent for minority clients. In addition, minorities have a higher rate of status 30 closures (closed after being found eligible with no plan or no services provided) and a higher rate of status 08 closures (closed prior to eligibility rate) than non—minorities. Table 2: Closure Outcomes by Minority / Non—Minority Status Rehabilitation Rate Status 30 Rate Status 08 Rate

Group	Status 30 Rate	Status 08 Rate
Minorities	67.14%	11.76%
Non—Minorities	19.61%	76.79%

While the rehabilitation rate for minorities is lower, the unemployment rate for minorities in Iowa shows that minorities do experience unemployment at a higher rate than non—minorities in the general population. The three—year ACS survey showed that the unemployment rates for African American Iowans was 14.9%, Hispanics at 9.1%, American Indian or Native Alaskan at 13.9%, and Asians at 4.5% compared to 5.2% for white Iowans. The Department seeks to ensure that all clients, regardless of race or ethnicity, achieve an employment outcome that is commensurate with their skills, abilities, and choice. Another concern may be that minority clients are closed before eligibility or before a plan or services is delivered at a higher percentage than non—minorities. Focus groups with Hispanic people with disabilities found that they tend to enter rehabilitation services from different referral sources than white clients. While white clients enter either through schools or medical practices, Hispanic people with disabilities tend to enter through regional Workforce Centers or community agencies that specialize in serving people who do not have English as their primary language. To address this difference, the Department will improve its outreach to IWD regional

centers and the Adult Basic Education programs that provide English as a second language training programs.

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

To assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within Iowa who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program the following activities were completed: Identifying individuals with disabilities who are unserved or underserved by the VR program is problematic because no data exist to differentiate between individuals who are not receiving services because they are not being served from individuals who do not want to receive services. The closest approximation to this projection is to identify people with disabilities who live in poverty according to the ACS and Community Participation Survey (CPS), and make the assumption that they are not being served but would benefit from services.

In Iowa, the 2014 ACS and CPS combined surveys were used to determine the number of people living in poverty. This analysis found that there were 344,894 individuals who said they had a disability, of whom 50,308 said they were blind or visually impaired. Considering only those who are working age (18 to 64) these people total 172,777 individuals with any disability, and 24,260 individuals who are blind or visually impaired. A total of 27.10% of the individuals who indicated they had a disability live at 125% of poverty or lower, and 19.90% indicate they live at the poverty level or lower. The poverty rates for people who said they were blind or visually impaired was slightly higher, at 28.21% and 21.03% respectively.

Other individuals who report they have a disability, but do not live in poverty may include those who are employed or choosing not to receive services. Regarding the number of people with disabilities in Iowa who are employed, that percentage is 42.95% and for employed people who indicate they are blind or visually impaired it is 51.04%, but no data exist to disaggregate their income. SSA and Department of Labor data suggest that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is declining, as is the number of applications for SSDI. Other reports indicate, however, that people with disabilities are overrepresented in jobs that pay less than average wages, which has been a consistent concern of the National Federation of the Blind. No secondary data exist to extrapolate the number of people who are blind or visually impaired who are unemployed but not seeking employments.

Focus groups with people currently receiving services from the Iowa Department for the Blind found that some who were employed were underemployed (still living below 125% of poverty), and some were long-term unemployed. Under the State Unified Plan, better data regarding this issue should become available through collaboration with other agencies that collect employment data.

It is feasible that the number of unserved or underserved people who are blind or visually impaired may be among the people with less formal education. In Iowa, there are 317,542 people with disabilities age 25 and over, of whom 47,155 are blind or visually impaired. Of these, 78,433 of all people with disabilities and 11,647 of people who are blind or visually impaired have less than a high school degree. Among those with no more than a high school degree, the numbers are 108,917 and 16,174. Among those with some college or an Associate's degree, the numbers are 83,831 and 12,449. Among those with a Bachelor's degree or higher, the numbers are 46,361 and 6,885. This suggests that 41.00% of all people with disabilities have more than a high school diploma and 60.70% of people who are blind or visually impaired have more than a high school diploma. At the Bachelors or higher level of formal education, the percentages are 14.60% and 26.40%. To improve the wages of people who are blind or visually impaired, focusing on improving the level of formal education is important, but they are succeeding at a higher rate than people with other disabilities.

Community Rehabilitation Program and One—Stop center staff have indicated that they lack experience in serving people who are blind or visually impaired and requested more training on working with these individuals. Client and counselor surveys have also indicated that community providers often hold lower expectations of the potential for employment and the capabilities of blind individuals. In addition, clients have reported that One—Stop center and other community service providers are often uncertain of techniques and methods to use when serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Until our One—Stop and community partners are trained, equipped and confident in providing services to our clients, they may not be

the best option for providing job search and job placement services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with the most significant disabilities. The Department will develop and provide trainings to these providers and one—stop partners to increase comfort and competence in providing their services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

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

To assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within Iowa who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system the following activities were completed:

Iowa Department for the Blind works with multiple state agencies to coordinate services for consumers. The most services are provided to consumers who are living in or near poverty. Focus groups with IDB consumers who were living in or near poverty identified the following agencies as also providing services. Among members of the statewide workforce development system, the coordinating agencies were, (1) educational institutions including secondary and postsecondary providers, (2) Iowa Workforce Development, (3) Iowa Temporary Assistance for Needy Families including food stamps and free/reduced lunch, (4) health care providers, and (5) community rehabilitation programs.

Structurally, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services does not serve people who are blind or visually impaired, but there are some individuals who are co—enrolled. Participants in focus groups voiced the following concerns regarding the other partnering agencies: 1.a. K—12 educational institutions received services through the Iowa Braille School and services were provided in an appropriate and effective manner. Interviews with Iowa Braille School personnel identified the process by which services are provided and the area for future planning includes improved transitions from the youth they serve to the vocational services of IDB. 1.b. Postsecondary educational institutions received uneven marks from focus group participants. All participants were concerned about policies, procedures, practices and resources related to accessibility. Of special concern was the lack of timely information regarding changes in plans such as class cancellations. Follow—up focus groups with postsecondary personnel identified the promising practice of an compute app they developed that provided auditory guides and resources that could be used to improve access to services. 2. Iowa Workforce Development received poor marks from participants due to accessibility concerns. Follow—up focus groups with IWD personnel indicated they needed more timely and ongoing training in how to make their services available to people from IDB because they were not sufficiently prepared to provide accessible services. 3. Iowa TANF services and food stamps were reviewed in the same manner as was IWD. The physical, procedural, and interpersonal approach used, especially by Department of Human Services personnel, was not satisfactory. Training and accessibility assessments are needed to ensure IDB consumers can access services successfully. 4. Health care providers were criticized in a similar manner. Accessibility was uneven, with some providers offering excellent assistance and others being unprepared to offer accessible services. Word of mouth among people who were blind or visually impaired identified the best providers, but not all of them took Medicaid, so additional outreach and training by IDB is warranted. 5. Community rehabilitation agencies also need training and technical assistance in serving IDB consumers. The quality of services was uneven with some agencies providing excellent services while others seemed unable to understand how to address the training and employment barriers related to blindness.

The survey of IDB consumers identified a similar pattern. Consumers tended to be satisfied with IDB services, but were less satisfied when they sought services from other agencies (other than K—12 schools). Collaboration across agencies needs improvement and is intended to be addressed under the Statewide Unified Plan.

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

To assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within Iowa who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre—employment transition services or other transition services the following activities were completed: This section examines whether persons in a particular age group are an unserved or underserved population. Comparisons were made between the representations of age groups in Iowa to the representation of age groups in the Department’s closure data. Employment outcome measures by age group were also reviewed. Among the working population in Iowa, persons aged 14—24 represent the largest age group (18.94%), followed closely by 45—54 age group (17.71%). The median age in Iowa is 38. Iowa’s Statewide Vision System, which coordinates the work of Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist itinerant services, reports that 515 students were being served. The ACS survey estimates for visual difficulties in Iowa by age are as follows: Table 3: ACS Estimates of Visual Difficulties by Age Age Group Estimated with Visual Difficulty Percentage of Total Population 5 — 17 2,879 0.55% 18—34 4,646 0.69% 35—64 19, 079 1.03%

Persons aged 45—54 represent the largest age group in the VR case closure data, followed by persons aged 35—44 and then 14—24. Older individuals are represented a bit higher in the Department’s VR caseload in comparison to their representation in the state. As the ACS survey data show, blindness and vision loss occurs more frequently among the older population groups. Therefore, the Department’s case closure data demonstrate that it is serving the age groups in proportion to Iowa’s population. The Iowa minority population is changing as the white population ages and the minority population is younger. A total of 15.8% of white Iowans are age 65 and older, while only 3.88% of minority Iowans are in that age range. A total of 23.3% of white Iowans are age 17 and under, while 36.49% of minority Iowans are in that age range. A review of data from cases closed between FY2011 and FY2015 shows that young adults are not closing as successfully after receiving services as their older counterparts. Table 4: Employment Rate after VR Services by Age Age at Application Total Cases Closed After Receiving Services (FY2011 thru FY2015) Percentage Employed After Receiving Services 14—24 109 64.22% 25—34 71 69.01% 35—44 120 74.17% 45—54 137 78.10% 55—64 94 88.30% 65—74 29 93.10% 75+ 12 75% As recent unemployment data show the experience of younger clients seeking work is similar to that experienced by their sighted peers. Data from the 2010 Current Population Survey show that all young Iowans experience more difficulty in finding employment than older adults. Table 5: Iowa Unemployment Rate by Age Age Group Unemployment Rate 16—19 16.4% 20—24 9.2% 25—34 6.4% 35—44 4.7% 45—54 5.1% 55—64 4.2% 65+ 2.7% Many factors contribute to the employment status of young adults, including work experience, availability of entry—level jobs, educational attainment, and skills. Certainly, the impact of the recession on this population as well as the 45—54 age group has been greater than on other age groups. One positive sign is that those clients aged 14 — 24 at application tend to be placed in full time jobs at a higher rate than other age groups. Clients aged 45 — 54 at application have seen a steady decrease in percentage of full—time employment since 2008. (Refer to the heading "Trends in Employment, Earnings, and Hours" below for more information.) However, the Department needs to continue focusing on young adults to ensure they attain the work experience they need in order to be successful later in life, particularly in this difficult and competitive labor market.

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

There are 144 Community Rehabilitation Programs in Iowa and IDB works with 14, primarily for employment services. A survey of IDB counselors indicated that 100% of them considered CRPs to need training in promoting supported employment and pre—employment services. They also reported that CRPs were unaware of the alternative techniques that could be used to engage in employment and often did not know how to provide training materials and other resources in formats that were accessible to people who were blind or visually impaired. The Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment, which has worked closely with CRPs for several years, facilitated meetings with IDB counselors and clients to discuss best practices in the delivery of customized employment services. Those discussions resulted in determining that CRPs also

need training in the area of customized employment.

Client and counselor survey results have identified that community providers lack awareness about blindness and the alternative techniques and potential accommodations for those who are blind or visually impaired. While CRPs can be a resource in addressing the needs of students, youth, and people with the most significant disabilities for career exploration and work experience, they need training to increase their comfort and competence in providing these services. The Department will work with community rehabilitation providers, center's for independent living, and independent contractors to provide clients with the training and supports they need within their own community.

Because people who are blind or visually impaired live in specific geographical areas, IDB can target those CRPs that are most likely to service our clients and provide training to them. IDB counselors indicate that, as well as providing training in the employment strategies listed above; these agencies also need training in cross—agency collaboration and improving the employment expectations of clients and their families.

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 .

According to a report provided by the Iowa Braille School (December, 2015) there are 114 students who are receiving services or consultation based on vision loss in school grades six through eight. There were 116 students receiving services in school grades nine through twelve. Approximately 35 percent of those students are in the Des Moines metro and surrounding area. Other students are throughout Iowa, with more than five students in the following counties: Des Moines, Woodbury, Pottawattamie, Dubuque, Linn, Johnson, and Clinton. Forty of Iowa's counties are reported to not have any students identified as receiving services and other counties. Forty—four counties have between one and four students receiving services. This number does not include students who may have additional disabilities including vision loss who are not receiving services.

It is estimated that in the next year, the number of students that will be referred through the IESBVI referral process will be approximately 85 students. Fifty—eight individuals are currently listed in the IDB transition database and 113 individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 are currently receiving vocational rehabilitation services (eFORCE, February, 2016).

The Department's closure data shows those with higher educational attainment close more successfully after receiving services than those with less education. Clients whose educational attainment is greater than a high school diploma close successfully at a high rate: Associates degree 71.17%; Bachelor's degree 86.84 percent; and Master's degree: 90.20%. The employment rate after services for those with a high school education is 73.91%.

As the table below shows, the median income for clients is lower than their counterparts in Iowa's general population. A client's work experience, type of employment, and the presence of public support all impact the weekly earnings the client achieves. While this is true of all people with disabilities across the nation, it offers evidence to use with schools to better engage them in career and transition planning.

Table 6: Median Earnings by Educational Attainment Educational Attainment Iowa ACS Estimate Dept. for the Blind Status 26 Closures (2011—2015) High school graduate (includes equivalency) \$26,606 \$12,938.20 Some college or associate's degree \$31,038 \$22,769.65 Bachelor's degree \$42,147 \$26,992.73 Graduate or professional degree \$55,245 \$47,364.15

When examining the unsuccessful closure statuses of clients, applicants to the program are more likely to be

closed before a plan is developed than closed as unemployed after a plan is developed. This is the case regardless of the educational attainment of clients and suggests barriers to the referral, intake, IPE planning process. These findings suggest that transition career services and pre—employment transition services are not sufficiently coordinated with school IEPs and they are not prepared to transition to adult services. The survey of counselors found that school special education teachers often do not notify the counselors of upcoming IEP meetings and that, upon review of those IEP, career planning across adult service agencies are not well developed.

Career and transition and planning services tend not to be provided by teachers of the visually impaired because they do not have curricula to address this area. Providing such training to these teachers, and obtaining better information to counselors regarding upcoming IEP meetings were viewed by counselors as ways to reduce the number of people closed before an IPE is developed.

k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

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

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's three—year American Community Survey, Iowa has an estimated 2,755 Iowans between the ages of 5 and 17 who have vision difficulties. According to the same survey, there are an estimated 24,620 Iowans between the ages of 18 and 64 who have visual difficulties. The Department estimates approximately 525 individuals will receive services under title I of the Act in FY 2016.

Approximately 30 individuals will concurrently receive services under title VI, part B of the Act. The ratio of applicants and eligible individuals served to vocational rehabilitation counselors will be 66 to one. The current staffing level does enable IDB to provide core services to clients.

When numbers of referrals increase, the Department identifies ways to effectively streamline processes to enable the staff to continue meeting client needs. Budgetary considerations and state regulations that limit personnel per state agency prevent us from changing our staffing to any great extent. Services are monitored to assure that all core services are provided and that all Services are monitored to assure that all core services are provided and that all active Individualized Plans for Employment are carried out in full. The Department is not under an order of selection and will be able to serve all applicants and eligible individuals. During the next five years, it is projected that the number of individuals served including those with most significant disabilities, will neither increase nor decrease significantly from the current level. Costs of services provided under title I of the Act are estimated at \$7,038,379. Costs for supported employment services under Title VI, Part B of the Act are estimated at \$57,000. Category Title I or Title VI Estimated Funds Estimated Number to be Served Average Cost of Services Title I \$7,038,379 525 \$13,406 Title VI \$57,000 30 \$1,900 Totals \$7,095,379 555 \$12,784

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

A. The VR Program;

Refer to k. Annual Estimates, section 1.

B. The Supported Employment Program; and

Refer to k. Annual Estimates, section 1.

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

IDB is not under an ourder of selection.

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

IDB is not 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.

Refer to k. Annual Estimates, section 1. IDB is not under an order of selection.

I. 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 Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) is an independent consumer—controlled commission; there is no State Rehabilitation Council. A Board of Commissioners governs IDB and works together with the agency Director to develop and agree to annual goals and priorities. The mission of IDB is to “Empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently.” The Department recognizes the need to improve services to Iowans who are blind and visually impaired across all agencies and organizations in the state. Through participation in workgroups related to the development of the Unified State Plan, the Iowa Department for the Blind has collaborated with other core partners to develop the State’s vision and goals, based on the Governor’s economic goals, Iowa’s NGA Talent Pipeline Goals, and Core Partner agency and stakeholder feedback.

Unified State Plan Vision Iowa’s workforce delivery systems will collaborate to build a Future Ready Iowa — a pipeline of skilled workers who are prepared to meet the workforce needs of Iowa’s current and emerging industries. In alignment with the National Governor’s Association Talent Pipeline vision and goals, this unified plan will ensure individuals are prepared for dynamic careers through an emphasis on lifelong learning while meeting the needs of employers. Iowa’s workforce delivery system will assist more Iowans to become Future Ready by attaining the “new minimum” of high—quality education, training, and work readiness by bringing together education, rehabilitation, workforce, and economic development resources and ensuring that all Iowans have access to an integrated and efficient workforce delivery system. Future Ready Iowans will be ready to meet the employment challenges of today and into the future so that ALL Iowans work in competitive, integrated employment settings.

Unified State Plan Goals Goal I: Iowa’s employers will have access to advanced, skilled, diverse and Future Ready workers. Goal II: All Iowans will be provided access to a continuum of high quality education, training, and career opportunities in the nation. Goal III: Iowa’s workforce delivery system will align all programs and services in an accessible, seamless and integrated manner.

Iowa Department for the Blind Goals and Priorities

The Iowa Department for the Blind’s mission is to empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently. The responsibility of the vocational rehabilitation program is to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with the most significant disabilities, to achieve high quality, competitive integrated employment. The Department will work with Iowa’s workforce system to increase the employment of such individuals in the competitive labor market through participation in job—driven training and provision of necessary supports.

In order to assist the state to meet the goals of the Unified State Plan and to meet the needs of Iowans who are blind and visually impaired, including those with the most significant disabilities, the Iowa Department for the Blind, after reviewing the current comprehensive statewide needs assessment has identified the following major goals:

IDB Goal 1: Iowa employers will become more aware of the Iowa Department for the Blind and the pool of advanced, skilled, diverse, and future ready workers the department can provide access to.

IDB Goal 2: All Iowans who are blind or visually impaired and require VR services to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment receive them.

IDB Goal 3: All individuals who are successfully closed employed will have found employment that aligns with their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and places them on their desired career pathway.

IDB Goal 4: The Iowa Department for the Blind will collaborate with Iowa's workforce delivery system to identify and reduce barriers to accessible, seamless and integrated services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

IDB Goal 5: Build mutually beneficial partnerships with entities in the community that provide or could provide services to Iowans who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition to the goals, and necessitated by emerging circumstances, the Iowa Department for the Blind will focus on the following additional priorities:

Priority 1: Implementation of WIOA with regard to Pre—employment transition services and Supported Employment.

Priority 2: On—going need for the professional development of all staff providing direct services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Priority 3: Integration of a new case management system to allow for the tracking of requirements under WIOA.

Priority 4: Increase outreach efforts to individuals from minority backgrounds.

The Iowa Department for the Blind will continue to work with current standards and indicators knowing that the state's common performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA are currently being developed and will greatly change the standards currently used for vocational rehabilitation.

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

Refer to: 1. State Goals and Priorities, section 1.

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

Refer to: 1. State Goals and Priorities, section 1.

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

Refer to: 1. State Goals and Priorities, section 1.

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

Refer to: 1. State Goals and Priorities, section 1.

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.

Refer to: 1. State Goals and Priorities, section 1.

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.

At present, the Iowa Department for the Blind is not implementing an Order of Selection. Policy and procedures continue to be reviewed should it ever be imminent.

B. The justification for the order.

Not applicable.

C. The service and outcome goals.

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable, the IDB is not under an order of selection.

2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

Not applicable. The IDB is not under an order of selection.

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

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

The Department's supported employment goal is that all blind and visually impaired Iowans who require supported employment services to obtain or retain competitive integrated employment receive them. The Department expects to receive \$57,000 in title VI, part B funds in 2016. These funds are intended to be used solely for supported employment services. At least 50% of the title VI funds will be used to provide pre-employment transition services to eligible youth with the most significant disabilities. Funds will be distributed according to the needs of eligible individuals for whom supported employment services are

deemed to be appropriate.

Supported employment services will be purchased on an individual basis and customized for each individual's situation. Because the need for supported employment services is likely to exceed the funds allocated for them under title VI, part B, funds from title I will be used to supplement the costs of supported employment services that are listed on an individual's supported employment individualized plan for employment (IPE). A lack of title VI, part B funds will not restrict or prohibit the inclusion of supported employment services on an IPE or the purchase or delivery of such services when they are needed.

The Department continues to develop relationships with community rehabilitation providers and educational partners to obtain referrals for career exploration and vocational rehabilitation services to individuals. The Department promotes competitive and integrated employment for individuals receiving supported employment services. Policy will be changed to allow for the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities up to 4 years as well as increasing extended services from 18 to 24 months as stated in the WIOA. Customized Employment has been added as a vocational rehabilitation service option.

Supported Employment services are currently being provided to 22 clients; it is feasible that the number served in 2017 will be 30 individuals. As part of the State Plan, IDB completed the mandatory Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to determine the current needs of Iowans with disabilities, as well as assess the services provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs. The Department has found that Community Rehabilitation programs are often unaware of the alternative techniques a person who is blind may use in accomplishing a job task. This lack of information and training can lead to a lack of appropriate placements in competitive and integrated employment.

During the timeframe that this state plan covers, the Department will monitor the number of individuals receiving supported employment services, taking into consideration the WIOA requirements to expend 50 percent of the total grant on youth with most significant disabilities. The Department is also exploring Customized Employment and work based learning opportunities. The Department will partner with Community Rehabilitation Organizations to generate referrals for individuals who can benefit from competitive integrated employment in their communities. The Department will also provide training and resources to community rehabilitation programs to assist them in meeting and understanding the needs and capabilities of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

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

Refer to n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds, section 1.

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.

Refer to n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds, section 1.

o. State's Strategies

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

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

In order to assist the state to meet the goals of the Unified State Plan and to achieve the goals and priorities of the Iowa Department for the Blind, several strategies were identified.

WIOA Goal 1: Iowa's employers will have access to advanced, skilled, diverse and future ready workers.

IDB Goal 1: Iowa employers will become more aware of the Iowa Department for the Blind and the pool of advanced, skilled, diverse, and future ready workers the department can provide access to. Strategy 1: Build mutually beneficial partnerships with Iowa businesses. Measure: The number of business relationships developed. The number of services provided to businesses Strategy 2: IDB will collaborate with WIOA partners to ensure Iowa's employers have ready access to advanced, skilled, diverse, and future ready workers. Measure: The number of partnerships with employers developed that create or expand work experience, internship, on—the—job training, and employment opportunities for Iowans who are blind and visually impaired. Strategy 3: IDB will build intra—agency collaboration that strengthens the agency's ability aid employers in the ability to provide accommodations and supports. Measure: The number of individuals who obtain employment and whose cases are closed successfully rehabilitated.

WIOA Goal 2: All Iowans will be provided access to a continuum of high quality education, training, and career opportunities in the nation.

IDB Goal 2: All Iowans who are blind or visually impaired and require VR services to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment receive them. Strategy 1: Actively engage the community to increase awareness of the mission, vision, and services available to Iowans who are blind and visually impaired and how to access them. Measure: Number of referrals to the Iowa Department for the Blind. Strategy 2: Outreach to potentially eligible students and their support systems to enhance awareness of, and the opportunities to receive IDB services. Measure: Number of referrals received through the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Strategy 3: All eligible individuals will have well—developed and supported individualized plans for employment that provide them with the education & training plans needed to achieve their career goal. Measure: Number of individuals successfully employed in competitive and integrated employment. Strategy 4: We will advocate that all eligible or potentially eligible youth will have well—developed individualized education plans that align with their career goals. Measure: Number of students who have IEP goals aligned with their career goal. Strategy 5: Assist all youth who are blind or visually impaired in their career path navigation by offering a variety of options supporting the transition from school to work. Measure: Number of students receiving pre—employment transition services prior to high school graduation. Strategy 6: Prepare Iowa's youth to meet the evolving demands of tomorrow's workforce. Measure: Number of students participating in paid work experiences prior to high school graduation. Strategy 7: Engage Iowa's youth in the career path development process using creative, progressive, and self—directed techniques in the delivery of career services. Measure: Percentage of students that have IEP goals that align with their career path interests.

IDB Goal 3: All individuals who are successfully closed employed will have found employment that aligns with their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and places them on their desired career pathway. Strategy 1: IDB will ensure IPE goals reflect the clients' knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests and the activities they engage in will align with career pathway. Measure: Percentage of services provided that align with the IPE goals. Strategy 2: IDB will promote participation in career pathways to meet business sector and consumer employment needs. Measure: Percentage of successfully closed cases who acquired skill gains toward credential or employment. Strategy 3: IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. Measure: Percentage of successful employment in competitive integrated work settings.

WIOA Goal 3: Iowa's workforce delivery system will align all programs and services in an accessible,

seamless, and integrated manner.

IDB Goal 4: The Iowa Department for the Blind will collaborate with Iowa's workforce delivery system to identify and reduce barriers to accessible, seamless and integrated services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Strategy 1: IDB will collect ongoing satisfaction data from counselors and clients on access to and participation in Iowa's workforce delivery system. Measure: Results of satisfaction survey data, tracking key points in the delivery of services. Strategy 2: IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. Measure: Number of collaborations that result in a relationship with employers. IDB Goal 5: Build mutually beneficial partnerships with entities in the community that provide or could provide services to Iowans who are blind or visually impaired. Strategy 1: Conduct outreach to community rehabilitation providers. Measure: Number of community rehabilitation providers contacted in areas of high density clients. Strategy 2: Provide trainings to community rehabilitation providers in the provision of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Measure: Number of individuals participating in trainings.

Priority 1: Implementation of WIOA with regard to Pre—employment transition services and Supported Employment. Outcome: Appropriate changes are made in policies and procedures. Priority 2: On—going need for the professional development of all staff providing direct services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. Outcome: Trainings provided to meet the needs of staff providing direct services. Priority 3: Integration of a new case management system to allow for the tracking of requirements under WIOA. Outcome: Tracking mechanisms will be established. Priority 4: Increase outreach efforts to individuals from minority backgrounds. Outcome: Establishment of relationships with entities serving individuals from minority backgrounds.

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 Department for the Blind provides assistive technology services and assistive technology devices to its clients as the needs are identified through each stage of the rehabilitation process. Through provision of services outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), IDB provides intensive training to individuals in the area of assistive technology including the use of screen magnification, screen—reading software, audio software and devices so that individuals who experience blindness or low vision can quickly be prepared to be able to participate in experiences and gain skills and credentials needed to obtain and maintain self—sustaining employment.

IDB Rehabilitation Technology Specialists work collaboratively with clients, training providers, and employers to identify and implement any technology needed for the individual to be able to participate in experiences or gain skills or credentials necessary to obtain and maintain self—sustaining employment. IDB is working to increase the number of technology trainers to ensure that the agency can respond statewide in a timely manner to critical assistive technology skill development needs to enable clients to be job—ready.

The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped — Career Resource Center provides technology, equipment and software to be used to prepare, gain and maintain skills and credentials needed for employment. Provision of talking book players, loaner devices to test out equipment, and training equipment is also provided to clients statewide.

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.

Like other blind agencies, self—referral is the most commonly recorded referral source. Many applicants have heard about the Department through community organizations and family or friends who have attended a presentation or previously received services. Therefore, outreach events must be varied and frequent. The Department’s Communication Specialist coordinates marketing, outreach, and public education efforts. These outreach activities include traditional approaches such as open house events, community based trainings, vision loss resource fairs, print and radio interviews, distribution of informational materials, tours of the Department, and presentations to employers, community services organizations, schools, self—help groups, and more. These events reach over 6,000 people annually. In addition to these traditional outreach approaches, the Department utilizes social media such as its web site, blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to promote its services and philosophy of blindness, maintain contact with constituents in the field, and communicate with community partners. With the addition of a dedicated intake specialist to the IDB team, all referrals are processed efficiently through a common gateway back to the Department.

As part of its marketing efforts, materials have been updated and reprinted for these target populations: Families & Friends, Service Providers, Healthcare Professionals, Community Organizations, Businesses, and Educators. The brochures contain information that is relevant to its intended audience about the Department’s main services: Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living and the Library. The information developed for these audiences is also available on the Department’s web site. Hispanic language versions of many of these brochures are now available to serve that segment of the population and have been circulated through community outlets.

In addition to direct contact with the public, we utilize other providers throughout the state to assist us in promoting the Department. Through its involvement with statewide Workforce System partnerships and the statewide Governance Group, the Department has established a network of referral sources to tap into populations who may not be directly contacted by the Department or may not initially believe or realize the Department is a resource for them.

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 Iowa Department for the Blind continues to work with school districts and the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IESBVI) to increase and expand services for students. The Department is working with the IESBVI to increase referrals of students at the age of 14. Ninety days prior to the transition IEP (no later than age 14) students are informed about Vocational Rehabilitation services available through the IDB by an IESBVI representative. Releases to share information are also gathered. The Department receives the referral and begins attempting to contact the family and student to assist them in the application process. The emphasis to serve youth and students with disabilities increases the need to collaborate with community rehabilitation providers in the provision of pre—employment transition services in order to increase the competitive integrated employment outcomes. Ongoing collaboration and communication amongst IDB, IESBVI, local educators, parents, and students are important to the overall transition efforts in Iowa. IDB staff and administrators will continue a process of training educators and service providers about the services the Department provides to students who are blind or visually impaired. One area of need often identified with students who are blind and visually impaired is a lack of understanding and ability to use assistive technologies. In effort to meet this need, the IDB offers a wide range and expanding menu of assistive technology services to transition age youth and educators of transition age youth. IDB technology specialists provide technology assessments and one—on—one assistive technology training to transition age youth at school or at home. IDB staff attend IEP meetings and consult with special

education teachers to help them come up with solutions to classroom access barriers. IDB technology specialists have implemented a program in which they provide a monthly webinar about assistive technology for TVIs, para—educators, and other education professionals. By mid—2016, the IDB will be launching a similar webinar series for teens.

IDB and IESBVI are working together to provide information and training to K—12 students and their families at annual Spring Vision Conferences. In addition, each entity is providing the other with training. For example, IDB will provide IESBVI staff with training and information about vocational rehabilitation at their annual Summer Institute as well as their annual Fall Vision Conference. IESBVI is providing IDB with training about the educational processes during a quarterly staff in—service meeting. The Department transition specialist works closely with the transition and family services coordinator for IESBVI; these individuals regularly discuss programs, potential referrals, processes, collaboration opportunities and potential improvements to transition programs and services. These efforts are all designed to improve communication, training, and knowledge among transition teams working with blind and visually impaired students. The Department continues to work to build relationships within communities across the state in efforts to connect students in high school with VR services. IDB counseling staff works with Regional Workforce Investment Boards and Transition Advisory Committees to inform them of the program and to develop work experience and career exploration opportunities for the transition students in integrated settings. IDB has also developed an internal Youth Employment Services team to bring together the different divisions of the agency to further discuss ways to improve and expand VR services. IDB has also developed several programs to expand the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services, to students who are blind or visually impaired.

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

The Department utilizes CRPs throughout Iowa when necessary for job coaching, assessments, training, or placement in supported employment. As the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment demonstrated, a small percentage of the Department’s clients access services from the CRPs. Our small pool of clients makes it difficult to build models of on—going collaboration. Developing individualized services with the CRP as the need arises is the approach the Department has found works best for the client and the CRPs. Also, because few CRP personnel have extensive experience in working with blind individuals, the Department works closely with CRP staff as necessary to ensure the client receives training and other services that appropriately addresses any additional impairment the client may have as well as the client’s blindness or vision loss.

The IDB participates as a member of the Governance Group in activities designed to enhance employment services for Iowans with disabilities, including Iowans who are blind and visually impaired. This partnership engages in systems-change initiatives that impact the coordination of employment services to Iowans with disabilities. IDB participates in these efforts to ensure that the employment of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those individuals who have the most significant disabilities have the opportunity to work in integrated, community-based, competitive employment settings.

IDB recognizes that we must assist CRPs in the state to increase their knowledge and skills in the provision of services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. IDB will build mutually beneficial partnerships with entities in the community that provide or could provide services to Iowans who are blind or visually impaired. We will conduct outreach to community rehabilitation providers throughout the state of Iowa. IDB staff will provide trainings to community rehabilitation providers in the provision of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

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

WIOA.

The Iowa Department for the Blind will continue to work with current standards and indicators knowing that the state's common performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA are currently being developed. Once the final regulations are published, the Department will review, evaluate and implement the performance expectations.

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

The Iowa Department for the Blind continues to participate with the state's One—Stop System partners on the strategic planning for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, including developing strategies to improve access to individuals participating in programs and trainings through One—Stop Centers and partner agencies. The Department also collaborates with other community agencies to ensure that their programs are accessible to clients who are blind or visually impaired.

The Iowa Department for the Blind will collaborate with Iowa's workforce delivery system to identify and reduce barriers to accessible, seamless and integrated services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The following strategies are used to assist the state workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities:

- IDB will collaborate with WIOA partners to ensure Iowa's employers have ready access to advanced, skilled, diverse, and future ready workers.
- IDB will build intra—agency collaboration that strengthens the agency's ability aid employers in the ability to provide accommodations and supports.
- IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments.
- The Iowa Department for the Blind will collaborate with Iowa's workforce delivery system to identify and reduce barriers to accessible, seamless and integrated services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- IDB will collect ongoing satisfaction data from counselors and clients on access to and participation in Iowa's workforce delivery system.
- IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments.

The Iowa Department for the Blind strategies were designed to achieve the goals and priorities of the Iowa Department for the Blind. The strategies used will be reviewed annually and progress will be measured.

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

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

The following are the strategies being used by the Iowa Department for the Blind to achieve the goals and priorities established by the State:

- Build mutually beneficial partnerships with Iowa businesses. Measure: The number of business relationships developed. The number of services provided to businesses
- IDB will collaborate with WIOA partners to ensure Iowa's employers have ready access to advanced,

- skilled, diverse, and future ready workers. Measure: The number of partnerships with employers developed that create or expand work experience, internship, on—the—job training, and employment opportunities for Iowans who are blind and visually impaired.
- IDB will build intra—agency collaboration that strengthens the agency’s ability aid employers in the ability to provide accommodations and supports. Measure: The number of individuals who obtain employment and whose cases are closed successfully rehabilitated.
 - Actively engage the community to increase awareness of the mission, vision, and services available to Iowans who are blind and visually impaired and how to access them. Measure: Number of referrals to the Iowa Department for the Blind.
 - Outreach to potentially eligible students and their support systems to enhance awareness of, and the opportunities to receive IDB services. Measure: Number of referrals received through the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
 - All eligible individuals will have well—developed and supported individualized plans for employment that provide them with the education & training plans needed to achieve their career goal. Measure: Number of individuals successfully employed in competitive and integrated employment.
 - We will advocate that all eligible or potentially eligible youth will have well—developed individualized education plans that align with their career goals. Measure: Number of students who have IEP goals aligned with their career goal.
 - Assist all youth who are blind or visually impaired in their career path navigation by offering a variety of options supporting the transition from school to work. Measure: Number of students receiving pre—employment transition services prior to high school graduation.
 - Prepare Iowa’s youth to meet the evolving demands of tomorrow’s workforce. Measure: Number of students participating in paid work experiences prior to high school graduation.
 - Engage Iowa’s youth in the career path development process using creative, progressive, and self—directed techniques in the delivery of career services. Measure: Percentage of students that have IEP goals that align with their career path interests.
 - IDB will ensure IPE goals reflect the clients’ knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests and the activities they engage in will align with career pathway. Measure: Percentage of services provided that align with the IPE goals.
 - IDB will promote participation in career pathways to meet business sector and consumer employment needs. Measure: Percentage of successfully closed cases who acquired skill gains toward credential or employment.
 - IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. Measure: Percentage of successful employment in competitive integrated work settings.
 - IDB will collect ongoing satisfaction data from counselors and clients on access to and participation in Iowa’s workforce delivery system. Measure: Results of satisfaction survey data, tracking key points in the delivery of services.
 - IDB will partner with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. Measure: Number of collaborations that result in a relationship with employers.
 - Conduct outreach to community rehabilitation providers. Measure: Number of community rehabilitation providers contacted in areas of high density clients.

- Provide trainings to community rehabilitation providers in the provision of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Measure: Number of individuals participating in trainings.

The Iowa Department for the Blind strategies were designed to achieve the goals and priorities of the Iowa Department for the Blind. The strategies used will be reviewed annually and progress will be measured.

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

The Department will utilize the following strategies in the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve VR services to blind and visually impaired Iowans under the State Plan and for the support of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

Statewide Independent Living Council. The purpose of the SILC is to strengthen the voice of Iowans with disabilities on issues affecting their lives, to build a statewide network of centers for independent living, and to collaborate with our partners in advancing the independence, productivity, and full inclusion of Iowans with disabilities. The Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is an independent nonprofit corporation whose Council Members are appointed by the Governor, and a majority of whom are persons with disabilities. Under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the SILC has the responsibility to plan for the coordination and expansion of independent living services in Iowa, and to promote the development of a statewide network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Centers for Independent Living and the Department work in collaboration in many ways. Collaborate in many ways to include heading up system change; that is help to organize people with disabilities to demand their civil rights, and fight against discrimination. Many of the freedoms and physical accommodations that people with and without disabilities enjoy today would not otherwise exist such as curb cuts, lifts on buses, elevators at metro transit stations, the passage of 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. At the Department, they work in collaboration with us when we host Vision Loss Resource Fairs, they help to get information out regarding our Community—Based Trainings, and they refer individuals with severe vision loss or who are blind. Overall, we collaborate to promote advocacy, independent living, and changing systems that negatively impact people with any kind of disability.

Iowa Self Employment (ISE) Program for Persons with Disabilities. The Iowa Self Employment program for Persons with Disabilities is a collaborative effort between IVRS and the Department. The Iowa Self—Employment program exists to provide quality, expert, client—centered services to Iowans with disabilities that embrace diversity, promote successful business ownership and result in self—sufficiency and economic development. This program partners with the Iowa Department for the Blind and its clients to offer entrepreneurial assessment, market feasibility assessment, business plan development, business financial and technical consultation as well as business augmentation support. While self—employment is not for everyone, for those who have an entrepreneurial spirit, ability to analyze markets and make good decisions, and where needed financial stability in order to access financing if that is necessary, this program is one to consider as a source to facilitating an individual from under or unemployment to gainful employment.

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.

Primary barriers that have been identified that relate to the equitable access to and participation of individuals who are blind and visually impaired in the IDB VR program and the IDB Supported Employment Services Program include transportation, technology, and availability. The Department for the Blind is reviewing current staffing levels in efforts to increase the presence of the Iowa Department for the Blind in local communities. We plan to have an eighth VR counselor in the field by the end of the year. In addition, we have domiciled an additional two employment specialists in areas that do not currently have a VR team member domiciled. The Department has been strategically domiciling positions throughout the state, to increase our presence and availability of staff to provide and coordinate VR services.

IDB Vocational Rehabilitation clients have historically not used the one-stop centers due to inaccessibility of technology and programs. The programs identified as inaccessible were computer training, resume writing, and assessments to assist in determining skill level and career options. Technology used in the one-stop centers was not accessible to persons needing magnification or screen reading software. Staff would provide reader service in some locations; however this minimized an individual's ability to be independent in their job search. Community partners have indicated a lack of knowledge on how to assist individuals in accessing services. One-stop center staff have shared that they needed training on how to provide services specific to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with most significant disabilities (cognitive disabilities, mental illness, physical disabilities, deaf-blindness).

The Department is working with our local one-stop partners and other training providers, in addition to employers and community service providers to increase access to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. IDB has been conducting accessibility consultations with a variety of these entities to assist them in becoming more accessible. IDB also provides technical assistance, training and resources to these entities. IDB plans to refer to our workforce and other partners more as we move forward in improving the delivery of VR services.

Transportation was identified as the primary need for individuals who are blind or visually impaired in Iowa. The regional transit systems are not available in every area, have limited availability, and are expensive. The lack of transportation services creates a dependence on others and is a major cause of concern for the participants whose goal is to be independent in their community. The Department is working with local agencies to identify transportation options. The Department is also working to develop trainings that can be conducted through technology such as webinars. IDB does often meet with clients in their home due to transportation barriers. When these barriers are addressed, rehabilitation teachers are also introduced to the client to assist them in learning alternative techniques related to orientation and mobility and methods for accessing transportation. IDB will continue to assist clients in addressing their transportation needs and in discovering methods of overcoming that barrier to accessing VR services.

Finally, IDB has experienced a number of changes in our staff over the last few years. We are continuously assessing the need for additional training regarding WIOA requirements, delivery of services, understanding of supported employment services, and increased levels of partnerships and agreements with our partners. The need for additional training in the delivery of services to individuals with the most significant needs has also been identified by staff and we are working with community partners to provide additional training to our staff. In doing this, we have found new opportunity to provide cross-training to various community partners as well, increasing not only ability for our partners to serve clients, but a greater awareness of the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

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

Describe:

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

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

The Iowa Department for the Blind is reviewing the goals established for the FY 2016 State plan. The Department is transitioning to goals and strategies that will align with the Unified State Plan goals. The below goals were approved for the FY 2015 State Plan.

VR Goal 1: All blind and visually impaired Iowans who require Vocational Rehabilitation services to obtain or retain employment receive them. Strategy: Continue utilizing the long—range marketing and outreach plan developed in 2009 to increase awareness of and referrals to the Department. Measure: The following measures will be used to gauge progress toward the goal: • Number of Referrals Compared to Previous Year. • Percentage of New Referrals to Re—referrals. • Percentage of Referrals Aged 14 to 64. • Number of Applications Compared to Previous Year.

Results: In FY 2014 1168 referrals were provided to the Iowa Department for the Blind. In FY 2015, this number went down to 945. The Department identified that there were several internal methods used to refer a client to VR services. The Department has changed this practice and is no longer counting all library patrons as referrals to the VR program; this has caused the referral number to decrease over the past year and this number will continue to be watched. Approximately 52% of referrals to the agency in FY 2015 were individuals who had been listed in the case management or library system prior. Approximately 36 % of referrals were of individuals between the ages of 14 and 64. In FY 2014 the Department took 428 applications, in FY 2015 that number increased to 564.

The Iowa Department for the Blind hosts a number of annual events that provide information about services offered by the Department each year. These events include the annual Braille Challenge, the legislative open house, and White Cane Safety Day events. The Department emphasizes the vocational rehabilitation program and the youth transition programs at each event, ensuring individuals are aware of the importance of early involvement in vocational rehabilitation services and the programs offered through the Department.

The Department continued to conduct a number of outreach events throughout the state, with staff presenting information about IDB services. Events such as the vision loss resource fairs, participation in transition fairs and events, and corporate and local government fairs and resource fairs have provided an opportunity for IDB staff to share a wide array of information about services. At all of these events, feedback is sought from attendees for follow—up and possible referrals. Department staff continues to welcome potential clients, interested professionals, and the general public to the IDB for tours that highlight available services.

VR Goal 2: All blind and visually impaired transition age youth and young adults experience employment outcomes that are commensurate with those of older blind and visually impaired Iowans.

Strategy: Utilize part—time employment placements as performance measures for Youth VR Counselors and provide Job Seeking seminars designed specifically for clients attending post—secondary school. Measure: The following measures will be used to gauge progress toward the goal: • Percentage of individuals aged 14—24 at application who close successfully employed after services. • Number of transition age youth and young adults placed in part—time employment for the purposes of obtaining work experience. (In these instances, the case will remain open until the employment goal has been achieved.)

Results: Eighty—six percent of individuals who were between the ages of 14 and 24 at application successfully closed their cases in FY 2015. Of those individuals who successfully closed their cases, seventy four percent had been placed in part—time employment for the purpose of work experience. The Department has set a goal that all clients have paid work experiences prior to graduation. In FY 2015, 91% of students graduated from high school with paid work experiences. One of the reasons for not meeting this goal is due to late application for vocational rehabilitation services. Another reason is due to parent or family member preference that the student not pursue employment during high—school and rather focus on education requirements.

Counselors work with schools and the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired to refer students at an earlier age so that career exploration, work experiences, work readiness skills, independence skills and advocacy skills can be developed prior to exit from secondary schools. Outreach and trainings to parents, schools and educators are being developed to work toward this goal.

VR Goal 3: All blind and visually impaired Iowans achieve the highest quality of employment outcome that

is commensurate with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Strategy 1: Provide a longer period for job stabilization before closure in cases where a client is working toward achieving more hours, and require additional documentation for cases closing in employment at less than twenty hours per week. Strategy 2: Ensure all clients receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income have the opportunity to receive individualized benefits counseling from a certified Benefits Planner.

Measures: The following measures will be used to gauge progress toward the goal: • Percentage of Full—time Closures (32 Hours or more per week). • Average Hours Worked per Week at Closure. • Average Hourly Wages at Closure. • Percentage of SSI & SSDI beneficiaries receiving benefits planning services. Results:

In FY 2015, 54% of clients successfully closing their cases were working 32 or more hours per week. The average hours worked per week at the time of closure was approximately 30 hours. Average wage was \$16.39 per hour. Twenty—eight percent of clients who were SSI and SSDI beneficiaries received benefits counseling services. Twenty—six percent of clients worked less than 20 hours per week; of those, 64% reported more than one disability and 36% were individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Counselors and other department staff have identified a need for increased training and education in working with persons with multiple disabilities; in particular persons with cognitive disabilities, mental illness, and brain injuries. Counselors are also working to identify community providers who are competent in working with persons who are blind and visually impaired, including individuals with the most significant disabilities.

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

Refer to previous section.

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.

SE Goal: All blind and visually impaired Iowans who require supported employment services to obtain or retain competitive employment receive them.

Strategy: Research new procedures for managing supported employment cases and develop strategic plan for supported employment services.

Measures: The following measures will be used to gauge progress toward this goal: • Number of closed individuals who had supported employment services on their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). • Percentage of individuals who close successfully employed after receiving supported employment services • Percentage individuals with identified secondary disabilities who close successfully employed after services. Results: In fiscal year 2015, five individuals who received supported employment services closed their cases. Of these individuals, four were closed successfully employed after receiving services. These individuals worked 20 hours or less; employment was in integrated competitive employment settings. Forty—nine percent of cases closing successfully employed after services reported having secondary and tertiary disabilities. Counselors have developed a work group that is developing strategies to identify individuals with secondary and tertiary disabilities who may require supported employment. The number of individuals receiving supported employment services has grown over the last year and counselors will continue to find ways to ensure clients who can benefit from these services receive them.

The following table shows the Department's performance on the Standards and Indicators for the last five years.

Performance Indicator RSA Standard FFY 11 Outcome FFY 12 Outcome FFY 13 Outcome FFY 14 Outcome FFY 15 Outcome

1.1: Number of Individuals with Employment Outcomes Equal or exceed 77 82 99 84 101

1.2: Individuals Receiving Services under an Individualized Plan for Employment and Percentage with an Employment Outcome 68.9% 77.67% 78.71% 77.68% 70.59% 76.5%

1.3: Competitive Employment Outcomes as a Percentage of all Employment Outcomes 35.4% 90.00% 87.42% 86.74% 85.71% 85.15%

1.4: Competitive Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Significant Disabilities as a Percentage of all Individuals with Significant Disabilities 89% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

1.5: Ratio of Average VR Wage to State Wage as a Percentage 59% 80.30% 87.70% 85.90% 86.33% 82.45%

Average Hourly Rate \$14.56 \$18.81 \$15.04 \$17.05 \$16.28

1.6: Percentage of Individuals Achieving Competitive Employment Outcomes Reporting Own Income as Primary Source of Support at Application and Closure 30.4% 17.36% 26.62% 31.21% 32.43% 35.22%

2.1: Access to Services for Minorities: The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non—minority backgrounds. .80 .823 1.109 .95 .86 .659

The Department routinely performs well on the Standards and Indicators. However, the Department did not meet Indicator 2.1 in FFY 2015. The Department will be reviewing and implementing strategies to ensure that outreach to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds is done in efforts to serve these individuals.

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

The Department did not meet Indicator 2.1 in 2015. The Department does not typically close more than 100 cases per year, thus are not often measured by this indicator. The Department will be reviewing and implementing strategies to ensure that outreach to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds is done in efforts to serve these individuals. IDB has also investigated the use of state contracts and other businesses to provide language services to individuals with limited English speaking abilities. The Department recognizes that individuals with minority backgrounds often enter VR services through regional Workforce Centers or community agencies that specialize in serving people who do not have English as their primary language. To address this difference, the Department will improve outreach to IWD regional centers and the Adult Basic Education programs that provide English as a second language training.

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

This plan is filed at a transitional period for standards and indicators in vocational evaluation; the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA have not been determined.

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

The Department will utilize the following strategies in the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve VR services to blind and visually impaired Iowans under the State Plan

and for the support of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Statewide Independent Living Council. Pursuant to the existing state plan for independent living the Department allocated \$7,799 from title I funds and \$9,123 from part B funds in FY 2015. The purpose of the SILC is to strengthen the voice of Iowans with disabilities on issues affecting their lives, to build a statewide network of centers for independent living, and to collaborate with our partners in advancing the independence, productivity, and full inclusion of Iowans with disabilities. The Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is an independent nonprofit corporation whose Council Members are appointed by the Governor, and a majority of whom are persons with disabilities. Under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the SILC has the responsibility to plan for the coordination and expansion of independent living services in Iowa, and to promote the development of a statewide network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Centers for Independent Living and the Department work in collaboration in many ways. Collaborate in many ways to include heading up system change; that is help to organize people with disabilities to demand their civil rights, and fight against discrimination. Many of the freedoms and physical accommodations that people with and without disabilities enjoy today would not otherwise exist such as curb cuts, lifts on buses, elevators at metro transit stations, the passage of 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. At the Department, they work in collaboration with us when we host Vision Loss Resource Fairs, they help to get information out regarding our Community—Based Trainings, and they refer individuals with severe vision loss or who are blind. Overall, we collaborate to promote advocacy, independent living, and changing systems that negatively impact people with any kind of disability. Iowa Self Employment (ISE) Program for Persons with Disabilities. The Iowa Self Employment program for Persons with Disabilities is a collaborative effort between IVRS and the Department. In fiscal year 2015, \$27,652 was used to support individuals in self—employment through this program. The Iowa Self—Employment program exists to provide quality, expert, client—centered services to Iowans with disabilities that embrace diversity, promote successful business ownership and result in self—sufficiency and economic development. This program partners with the Iowa Department for the Blind and its clients to offer entrepreneurial assessment, market feasibility assessment, business plan development, business financial and technical consultation as well as business augmentation support. While self—employment is not for everyone, for those who have an entrepreneurial spirit, ability to analyze markets and make good decisions, and where needed financial stability in order to access financing if that is necessary, this program is one to consider as a source to facilitating an individual from under or unemployment to gainful employment.

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 Department provides supported employment services to an eligible individual with a most significant disability, including youth with the most significant disabilities, for whom competitive and integrated employment has not traditionally occurred, or for whom competitive and integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability. Supported employment is competitive employment in an integrated setting consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The eligible individual, the counselor, and when appropriate, other extended service providers will jointly plan supported employment services. Extended supported employment services shall be provided by other agencies, organizations, employers, or other available sources with whom cooperative arrangements will be made. Comparable services and benefits will be used to the maximum extent appropriate. Services will be provided in the most integrated setting possible consistent with the individual's informed choice. Supported employment services may include:

- An assessment of the need for

supported employment; • The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site; • Job development and placement • Social skills training; • Regular observation or supervision of the individual • Follow—up services including regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; • Facilitation of natural supports at the work site; and, • Any other service necessary to achieve an employment outcome. These services will be provided for a period of time that will not exceed twenty—four (24) months, except for special circumstances when the counselor and the eligible individual jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment. Vocational rehabilitation counselors and their supervisor closely monitor the quality of services throughout the duration of their provision to insure that services are appropriate, timely, cost—effective, and of the same quality as those services provided under Title I.

2. The timing of transition to extended services.

Refer to previous section.

Certifications

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate

Name of designated State agency

Full Name of Authorized Representative:

Title of Authorized Representative:

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 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

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 **Iowa Department for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Richard L. Sorey**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Director**

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 **Iowa Department for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Richard L. Sorey**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Director**

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 **(A) is an independent State commission**

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 **Yes**

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: **Yes**

g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

h. the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act .**
- j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.**
- m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.**

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

- a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act .**
- c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act?**

Agency will provide the full range of services described above **Yes**
- d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.**
- g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.**

h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.

i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

i. has developed and will implement,

A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and

ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and

(H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that:

- i. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act**
- ii. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.**

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State