

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

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

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[13] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

### A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a citizen advisory council appointed by the Governor that partners with the Arkansas Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to develop and to carry out the VR State Plan and ARS' goals and priorities. The SRC assists in shaping and reviewing policy, engages in strategic planning, evaluates the effectiveness of the VR Program, analyzes consumer satisfaction, and provides guidance when developing and reviewing cooperative agreements. The SRC meets quarterly and is updated on important events affecting ARS.

The SRC provided analysis and guidance on the following initiatives:

- The 2018 VR State Plan update and the 2020-2023 VR State Plan
- ARS Field Policy Manual updates
- The 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

At the request of the SRC, ARS provides a consumer satisfactory survey at case closure. Surveys are tabulated and results are included as part of the SRC's annual report, which is reviewed at the December SRC meeting each year.

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

ARS informs the SRC of state level initiatives affecting VR operations. At the December 2018 meeting, ARS presented changes to the field program policy and procedures manual for SRC input and approval.

At the March 2019 meeting, the ARS Commissioner briefed the SRC about the state-level reorganization effort known as the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 that would place ARS within the Division of Workforce Services, the WIOA partner within Arkansas for Titles I and III

programs. The SRC expressed approval of the proposed reorganization, which was signed into law on April 11, 2019.

The SRC received updates regarding progress on the CSNA conducted by the University of Arkansas. The completed survey was presented to the SRC at the June 2019 meeting. One particular finding in the CSNA indicated the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) should be transformed from a residential program to a new delivery model. This finding was consistent with results from the most recent ACTI monitoring report, and the SRC agreed changes were necessary.

At its quarterly meeting on December 19, 2019, the SRC reviewed the proposed 2020-2023 VR State Plan and expressed approval without comment.

### 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

No input or recommendation from the SRC was rejected by ARS.

#### 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;

Not applicable to ARS.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not applicable to ARS.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Not applicable to ARS.

#### 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;

ARS collaborates and coordinates services with federal, state, and local agencies that contribute to the vocational rehabilitation and independent living of Arkansans with disabilities. Collaborating agencies include:

- Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Learning Services, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services

- Arkansas Governor's Employment First Taskforce
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Developmental Disability Providers
- Department of Human Services - Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, Working Disabled Medicaid Program, and Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.
- Supported Employment Vendors
- Social Security Administration Ticket to Work
- Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

ARS is the lead agency for the Arkansas Assistive Technology (AT) program. AT initiatives supported through the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program include device demonstration, loan, and reutilization activities. ARS also has administrative responsibility for the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) that provides low interest rate, extended term loans for the purchase of assistive technology.

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

ARS has no cooperative agreements with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture. The ARS field program provides information and contact names to potential clients that may qualify for SNAP benefits. Additionally, ARS field offices collaborate with local SNAP liaisons to provide updates to field staff on SNAP processes.

## 4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

ARS maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including:

- Arkansas Workforce Development Boards (state and local)
- Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council
- SoundStART
- The Arkansas Independent Living Council
- The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities
- Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program
- Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition

- Disability:IN – Arkansas

## 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

ARS has no state use contracting programs.

### D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

#### 1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

A pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) counselor and a Transition counselor are assigned to high schools in the state. Counselors provide direct services to students in the school setting under the core service categories for Pre-ETS, and they provide counseling and guidance on moving into transition services, fully affording students both knowledge and the means to enter into the vocational rehabilitation program.

In order for Pre-ETS to be provided in the school setting, an application for services must be completed by the entity proposing to provide services. The application must be reviewed and approved by a selection committee. Next, an agreement to operate within the school system is developed and approved by all parties. Pre-ETS require monthly reporting by the vendor, prior approval of the curriculum, and monitoring by ARS and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) with collaboration and input from the local school officials.

Additionally, ARS has developed a plan to partner with school systems to provide Opportunities for Work-Based Learning (OWL). School systems complete proposals to provide services, which delineate Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and WIOA responsibilities. The partnership includes measurable criteria, a reporting structure, and a monitoring guideline.

The following are the responsibilities of ARS and DSB regarding transition planning and vocational rehabilitation services for eligible youth:

1. Designate vocational rehabilitation personnel to be responsible for the provision of technical assistance, consultation, and the development of statewide program strategies and procedures applicable for youth with disabilities and those eligible for 504 plans.
2. Facilitate the identification of youth with disabilities who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services as early as possible, but no later than the academic year in which the student turns 16.
3. Make relevant data available about eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and track information about employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.
4. Assign vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel to develop relationships with LEAs to formalize collaborative approaches to student outreach and transition planning and referral development and tracking.

5. Make LEA personnel, students, and their families aware of the vocational rehabilitation program, including VR eligibility requirements (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.42), and the application procedures and scope of services (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.48) that are provided to all eligible or potentially eligible individuals.
6. Provide the core Pre-ETS to eligible and potentially eligible students with signed parent/guardian consent.

### **Procedures for Timely Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Transition Students**

The process for moving students into transition for the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment includes having the Pre-Employment Transition Counselor first identify the students that want to participate along with the parents/guardians that have given their approval. The Participation Agreement Form captures who would like to move forward with signatures of the student and the parent/guardian. These forms are given to the Regional Managers in the Fall Semester of the Senior year, no later than December 1st for assignment to Transition Counselors. Next, a meeting is scheduled by the Pre-ETS Counselor for the Transition Counselor, Pre-ETS Counselor, Parent/Guardian, Student, and School staff. The IEP is reviewed along with the student's progress in Pre-ETS services. This meeting is to explain the process, services, and the documents required in order for the student to apply for VR Transition services.

The party responsible for the student (parent/guardian/student) will be provided with a flyer that describes the steps of the VR process and the documentation needed to initiate the process. In some cases, students may not have social security cards or state issued identification cards. At this time applications and information are provided in order to obtain these documents. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor will facilitate obtaining the documents needed to make a seamless referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Transition.

In order for the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor to move forward with an application, certain documentation is needed. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor assists in providing a smooth referral process by giving clear copies of the following documents to the receiving counselor:

1. Demographic Form
2. Driver's License or State Identification Card
3. Social Security Card
4. Disability Information (IEP, 504, or medical record)
5. Social Security Benefits Awards Letter
6. Income information (if available)

These items along with the complete referral packet is given to the receiving counselor. The Pre-Employment Transition Counselor then documents the date of referral. Students will have Individualized Plans for Employment completed prior to graduation in May of each year when cases are transferred in this manner by December 1st.

### **Pre-ETS Students and Section 511**

ARS has developed forms and processes to delineate that the required services and documentation are provided prior to entry into a subminimum wage situation.

Counselors contact each school they are assigned to at the beginning of the school year (1st semester of school) to inquire if any families or educators have identified their students as a potential candidate for sub-minimum wage/sheltered work. If a student is seeking subminimum wage, or if it is unknown whether or not the student could benefit from competitive integrated employment, the Pre-Employment Transition Counselor meets with the student and parent or guardian to provide informed choice and career counseling.

The counselors work with the high school transition team, the student, and their family to gather documentation of the transition services the student receives while participating in high school. This documentation will demonstrate the student's ability to participate in competitive integrated employment.

Students are afforded work-based learning through Pre-Employment Transition and should they require additional supports to participate, they are moved into trial work to utilize Employment 1st Discovery or Supported Employment where they experience a variety of work situations. An eligibility determination can be made once these processes have had sufficient time and variety to allow the student to work.

If a student has participated in Pre-Employment Transition with ARS and/or through transition services offered by the school and there is clear and convincing evidence that the student is not a candidate for competitive integrated employment, the counselor will gather the documentation (Individualized Education Plan, Transition Plan, Pre-employment Services Progress Reports, and/or the ARS Work Experience Progress Reports) and the appropriate forms will be signed and disseminated.

ARS forms require clear and convincing supporting documentation regarding a decision on the student's ability to benefit in competitive integrated employment, signatures be obtained of all parties involved, all documents are presented at least 45 days after completion, that the method of transmission is documented, and that career counseling is again provided within 30 days of case closure.

### **Age for Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind Arkansas have agreed to begin Pre-Employment Transition Services at age 16 through age 21.

## **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;**

ARS has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU) for students in public schools. The parties agree to participate in technical assistance and in-service training to assist educational agencies in planning and coordinating services to ensure eligible individuals receive timely and appropriate supports and services. ARS Transition policy requires counselors to engage school personnel to generate student

referrals and to develop an IPE for each student determined eligible. ADE is financially responsible for the delivery and coordination of secondary education as set forth through IDEA. ARS is responsible for coordinating Pre-ETS, taking applications, determining eligibility, and providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals determined eligible for transition services. The Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies was signed by the Department of Education, Special Education Unit on 12/13/17, by the Commissioner of ARS on 1/11/18, and the Division of Services for the Blind on 1/30/18. It went into effect on 1/30/18 when the last party signed.

ARS participates in the state level Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP). AITP is a task-force made up of representatives of state agencies, including ARS, DSB, ADE SEU – Arkansas Transition Services, the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, DHS-Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, and parent advocates.

#### Consultation and Technical Assistance

In order to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education and employment, ARS and DSB support the following transition services to vocational rehabilitation personnel, the ADE SEU, and the local education agencies by:

1. Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities through group conferences, instructional materials and guidelines, reporting forms, webinar training, and telephone/email communications.
2. Coordinating public speaking and training activities on transition services provided by local education agencies under IDEA.
3. Developing model transition demonstration projects, and establishing or supporting partnerships involving the local education agencies to achieve the goals of improved transition outcomes.
4. Expanding Pre-ETS in schools throughout the State and at the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC). ARS transformed the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) to a new service delivery model, ACDC. This model focuses as a hub for training and services to support VR consumers and/or students with disabilities to successfully reach the milestones of their individual plans for employment.

ARS, LEAs, ADE, and VR service providers receive intensive technical assistance and professional development from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) on topics like implementing evidence-based practices and preparing graduates for success in postsecondary education and employment.

#### **B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;**

ARS provides eligibility determination according to ARS policy, and consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services when requested and appropriate. ARS counselors meet with special education teachers during the school year and provide information to

schools about VR services, and ensure schools have appropriate forms and information for students to apply for services. ARS works with schools to assist the student with significant disabilities in identifying, selecting, and pursuing appropriate career objectives.

Partner high schools agree to work cooperatively with ARS to provide appropriate transition services to students to equip them for entry into the workforce, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. Schools carry out all required transition planning provisions mandated by the IDEA and state regulations, conduct regular staff development training regarding transition requirements and include ARS counselors in the training when appropriate, provide referrals to counselors, provide private space for counselors to meet with students, include counselors in students Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with authorization by parents or guardians and student knowledge, communicate regularly with counselors, and provide copies of school records.

ARS provides accommodations as needed to aid in successful completion of the vocational education program for VR eligible youth in accordance with their respective IPEs, unless these accommodations are the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) regulations. ARS provides technical assistance to local education agencies to ensure all youth and students have equal educational opportunities to participate in programs, activities, and job opportunities, and to analyze, identify, and change policies and activities that impede the achievement of equal opportunities for all individuals.

**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 Interagency Agreement between the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services, Division of Career and Technical Education, and ARS defines each party’s responsibilities with regard to ensuring FAPE for eligible students, ages 16-21, and younger when appropriate, which are identified as having a disability in accordance with IDEA.

ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB jointly agree to the following:

1. The ADE SEU is the agency responsible for ensuring that FAPE is made available to eligible students pursuant to IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(1)).
2. School districts have the primary planning, programmatic, and financial responsibilities for the provision of education transition services and related services for students as a component of FAPE and these services are provided to eligible students with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, and younger when determined appropriate through the implementation of the IEP. The parties acknowledge ADE SEU has general supervisory responsibility over the educational program of any public agency providing FAPE to individuals with disabilities, ages birth to 21, as defined in state and federal statutes.
3. The distinction between transition and related services that are the planning, programmatic, and financial responsibility of the school district is determined based on a delineation of the customary services the school provides under IDEA Part B. These distinctions describe the activities, supports, and funding ARS provides to support Pre-ETS in partner school settings or during the school day.



4. ARS is financially responsible for providing Pre-ETS to students who meet the definition of students with a disabilities as defined by WIOA. ARS works cooperatively to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the training and necessary supports to transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary activities, including but not limited to vocation training and employment, and completing an IPE before leaving the school setting. ARS agrees the student and/or designated party has choice in the development of the IPE.

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

ARS counselors attend IEP and transition planning meetings, career fairs, back to school nights, group orientations, and transition fairs, and make presentations to schools and families throughout the year with partner agencies like Arkansas Transition Services, Department of Youth Services, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, Workforce Services and the Division of Services for the Blind. ARS collaborates with partner agencies through shared recruiting and the application processes for special programs outreach. These outreach efforts provide creative programs like the Youth Leadership Forum, the Inclusion Film Camp, the Transition Employment Program, and the Opportunities for Work-Based Learning Program in order to identify students and get them interested in work and in participating in the full array of transition services. Additionally, ARS goes directly to educational settings in Department of Youth Services facilities, where youth who are at-risk are identified and provided Pre-ETS, as well as given an opportunity to apply for full vocational rehabilitation services. ARS also provides brochures and introductory meetings to explain what Project SEARCH can offer youth seeking permanent employment outcomes.

ARS works directly with the schools and community partners to provide education on Pre-ETS and Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Transition stakeholders and partners participate in NACT's sponsored capacity building activities, such as The Capacity Building Institute and related regional and/or national meetings. Arkansas utilizes a state implementation team to support personnel development opportunities for Arkansas educators and service providers. The implementation team participates in data review, problem solving, and strategic planning that informs personnel development opportunities.

#### **Referral Process and Parental Consent**

Pre-ETS counselors directly assigned to the school provide Pre-ETS referral packets to all students and schools. Students who are interested complete the referral packet with their parent/guardian with assistance from the Pre-ETS counselor. The Referral packet includes:

1. Cover Letter
2. Pre-ETS Referral Form
3. Informed Consent/Release of Information – This form is required to be signed and uploaded in the electronic case file prior to the initiation of services.
4. Benefits Planning Consent Form (if applicable)
5. Social Security Administration 3288 Consent Form (if applicable)

#### **Number of Potentially Eligible in the State**

Each year in September ARS requests a data pull from the Arkansas Office of Information Technology, which provides a total count of students aged 16-21 in the state on Individual Education Plans and on 504 plans within the public school system.

### **Set-aside Process for Authorized Activities**

ARS utilizes the WINTAC guidance formula for determining the total amount of funds that can be expended on authorized activities. First, ARS uses the WINTAC formula to find the cost per student on coordination and core services using the financial information for this fiscal year.

Using Office of Information Technology statistics, we locate the total number of students in the system who could be potentially eligible and divide that by the total amount of money spent on core and coordination services. That total cost is divided by the total of potential students to calculate a cost per student. Because we have no clear documentation that can show what percentage refuse services, we leave this amount at 0%. Then the total number of students is multiplied by the cost per student. That number is subtracted by the total of our 15% set-aside.

It is important to note that as a result of completing this exercise for the 2018-2019 school year, the projected total cost per student was \$172.00, much lower than what ARS should spend to provide a quality service with enough time investment to impact students in a positive way. For this reason, ARS made the decision to focus on core and coordination activities for expenditures to the 15% in the future.

### **E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

ARS requires potential vendors to complete an application process and provide required credentialing to become an approved vendor. ARS contracts with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) utilizing Purchased Service Agreements. All vendors are required to meet standards to ensure VR clients achieve acceptable employment outcomes, and vendors are compensated based on performance outcomes.

The CRP contract outlines the specific employment services to be provided and the available compensation, which is outcome based fees per service with the total funding available. The service component varies per vendor dependent on their ability to provide the service. CRPs may provide only job placement services (Referral, Job Development/Placement and Closure.) Others may provide Employment First services (Discovery, Employment Path, Job Development/Placement, and Closure), Supported Employment (Referral, Job Development/Placement, Stabilization and Closure) and Individual Job Coaching Services. The contract describes the objectives/scope of the service(s), and performance standards for competitive integrated employment. The contract has separate attachments related to service description, outcome per service, funding grid, and an attachment identifying the performance deliverables and the performance indicators requiring expansion of employment opportunities and successful outcomes to individuals with disabilities. The contract defines continued funding may be based on successful outcomes.

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

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

ARS maintains cooperative agreements/contracts with private non-profit and for profit CRPs, which define the requirements for the provision of supported employment (SE) services and extended services. The cooperative agreements/contracts include commitments by the CRP to fund extended services for a period of time as needed by the client and the employer for successful employment.

ARS maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Human Services - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) in which DDS agrees to pay for extended services for clients who receive Medicaid waiver services after ARS has closed the case as successfully employed.

#### G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

##### 1. VR SERVICES; AND

The Business Engagement Unit (BEU) is responsible for employer outreach. The BEU builds relationships with employers to identify and provide solutions to assist businesses in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent, and provides disability awareness and sensitivity training. The BEU provides counselors with information about labor market, job vacancies, skills necessary to obtain jobs in high-demand occupations, and earning potential and advancement opportunities in various occupations to increase opportunities for achieving competitive integrated employment.

ARS works with Career Workforce and Local Workforce Boards to identify potential skill deficits that may act as barriers to employment, and identifies the most appropriate training to assist clients in obtaining employment.

ARS provides presentations, evaluation, expertise, and assistance to counselors, their clients, employers, and employees with disabilities in the provision of accommodations to facilitate successful vocational outcomes through the AT@Work and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs.

The AT@Work program is designed to assist ARS clients and referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in selecting and obtaining the appropriate assistive technology to facilitate the achievement of the clients' established vocational goals and attain successful, competitively integrated employment outcomes. Services through the AT@Work program include assistive technology and accommodation evaluation and assessment, assistive technology device selection and procurement, training and technical assistance, as well as occupational abilities assessments. These services are primarily directed as it relates to education, school, training programs, vocational and technical education programs, and job retention efforts. AT@Work is a statewide program staffed by Occupational Therapists and an Accommodations Specialist.

The SAW/RTW program is designed to provide support to employers and employees when an employee is experiencing an injury or illness that results in a disabling condition, inhibiting the employee from remaining at work or returning to work as soon as it is safe and medically feasible. Program staff include a SAW/RTW coordinator and an administrative assistant. They can also recruit the assistance of evaluation staff located in the AT@Work program. SAW/RTW provides access to professionals who have expertise in the areas of: Vocational counseling to assist an employee in the process of adjusting to a disability and the importance of remaining positive as it relates to stay-at-work/return-to-work efforts; specialized vocational assessments that help identify an employee's vocational strengths and weaknesses as it relates to successful job performance; job site assessment to determine how an employee's presenting disability interferes with task performance and with the identification of potential modifications to the work environment; job analysis to identify the specific functions of a job and the mental and/or physical requirements needed for successful job performance; and individualized employee training regarding the correct use of any new technology or equipment introduced to assist in work performance. Staff can also provide general ergonomic assessments and training targeted toward employees in jobs that may present the likelihood of occurrence of injury or illness that leads to disability.

The SAW/RTW coordinator works with the employee and the employer to develop a SAW/RTW plan that, if required, addresses the need for accommodation in the workplace; identifies successful performance indicators with employer assistance; outlines the process to return or maintain the employee's employment; or after investigation may determine potential assignments for transitional employment.

## 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

ARS provides and/or procures transition services including Pre-ETS for students and youth with disabilities through community rehabilitation programs that place students into paid work experiences with a variety of employers throughout the state or directly with employers, depending on the vocational interests of the student or youth. Employers facilitate opportunities in group settings and individually with job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, and workplace readiness training. Employers are also contracted to provide on-the-job training experiences, job placement, supported employment, and customized employment opportunities. ARS provides assistive technology assessments and training to assist students transitioning from school to postsecondary or to vocational training or to work.

## 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 Arkansas Department of Human Services operates the State Medicaid program. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and

the other agencies collaborate on the Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

ARS, along with DHS – Medicaid, Developmental Disabilities Services, and Aging, Adult and Behavioral Health Services, through a Memorandum of Understanding and collaborative efforts have received technical assistance through EconoSys (Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Program) to enhance employment opportunities since 2015. Most recently the technical assistance has orchestrated Subject Matter Experts (SME) to assist with State Agency as Model Employer (SAME), to begin planning for the expansion of Employment First, and to enhance supported employment for individuals with behavioral health concerns.

Since 2019, the SME for SAME has assisted this partnership in hosting training sessions with state human resource managers educating them on SAME and by helping them to see that individuals with disabilities can be a part of the talent pool of job seekers. Ten individuals with developmental disabilities remain employed from the 2018 pilot in extra help positions working within state agencies. Two individuals have been employed permanently with the State. The DHS/Developmental Disabilities Services created the process for using extra help positions with services provided through ARS supported employment for on-the-job supports, stabilization in their positions, and extended services funded by Medicaid. In 2020, the SAME technical assistance plan is to create a Round Table of State Directors to develop a strategic plan for changing the state HR hiring practices for individuals with disabilities to become employed either through permanent state positions or extra help. The state unit has received support from the Governor's Office and the state Office of Personnel Management. The SME will continue to provide training opportunities through PowerPoints, webinars, and onsite visits.

The Arkansas state team collaborated with the SME to show solidarity for Employment First, to identify employment as a choice for all individuals with disabilities with a focus primarily on individuals with behavioral health concerns. In 2019, the technical assistance plan focused on educating the state leaders in the behavioral health agency on employment/supported employment as part of the recovery plan for individuals with behavioral health concerns through evidence based practices called Individual Placement and Supports (IPS.) As Arkansas transitioned the Medicaid Waiver services from DHS to organized care through the Arkansas Provider-led Shared Savings Entities, referred to as the PASSE, the efforts related to moving this initiative forward slowed. The SME and team trained the PASSE supervisor on supported employment for individuals with behavioral health concerns in late summer of 2019, who supports these new services. In 2020, the technical assistance plan focus is on identifying the types of services to be offered to individuals with behavioral health concerns, and the continued education of the PASSE staff, vocational rehabilitation staff, and behavioral health entities with the desired outcome of initiating one pilot program.

## 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The Department of Human Services – Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. ARS, DDS, and other agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives. ARS, DDS, and the other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates

roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA.

### 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The Department of Human Services – Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services (DAABHS) is responsible for providing mental health services. ARS, DAABHS, and other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, DAABHS and the other agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

##### 1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

###### A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

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

#### I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

ARS currently is serving 14,662 clients and employs a total of 307 staff.

#### **Access and Accommodation – (Total 8)**

Administration – 2

Evaluation – 4

Administrative Support – 1

Extra Help – 1

#### **ACDC – (Total 56)**

Administration – 6

Counseling – 7

Training – 18

Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16

Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4

Administrative Support – 5

Extra Help – 0

#### **Field Services – (Total 186)**

Managers – 13

Counselors – 91

BERs – 11  
Administrative Support – 68  
Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 57)**

Commissioner’s Office – 4  
Field Administration – 5  
PPD&E – 11  
IT – 2  
Finance – 12  
Communication – 3  
HR – 7  
Administrative Support – 8  
Extra Help – 5

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

**Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)**

Administration – 4  
Evaluation – 6  
Administrative Support – 1  
Extra Help – 1

**ACDC – (Total 57)**

Administration – 7  
Counseling – 7  
Training – 18  
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16  
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4  
Administrative Support – 5  
Extra Help – 0

**Field Services – (Total 204)**

Managers – 13  
Counselors – 95  
BERs – 13  
Administrative Support – 80  
Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 69)**

Commissioner’s Office – 4  
Field Administration – 7  
PPD&E – 11  
IT – 2  
Finance – 13  
Communication – 4  
HR – 9

Administrative Support – 8  
Extra Help – 10

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.

**Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)**

Administration – 4  
Evaluation – 6  
Administrative Support – 1  
Extra Help – 1

**ACDC – (Total 57)**

Administration – 7  
Counseling – 7  
Training – 18  
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16  
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 4  
Administrative Support – 5  
Extra Help – 0

**Field Services – (Total 204)**

Managers – 13  
Counselors – 95  
BERs – 13  
Administrative Support – 80  
Extra Help – 3

**Central Office – (Total 69)**

Commissioner's Office – 4  
Field Administration – 7  
PPD&E – 11  
IT – 2  
Finance – 13  
Communication – 4  
HR – 9  
Administrative Support – 8  
Extra Help – 10

**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;



Currently, the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas – Little Rock provide degrees in rehabilitation counseling. ARS monitors student enrollment in vocational rehabilitation and related programs at each institution by category, the number of students currently enrolled, the number of students graduating the previous year, and certification or licensure. ARS works with the institutions to provide internship and practicum opportunities, and notifies the universities when job openings become available.

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

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 23 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 78 (FT) and 103 (PT)

## 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.

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 17 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 29 (No distinction between FT/PT)

## 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.

ARS focuses on the successful recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, and maintains a working relationship with colleges, universities, and higher education programs within the state. ARS provides information about agency benefits such as tuition assistance and loan forgiveness to partner universities that have vocational rehabilitation programs.

ARS maintains staff liaisons with the university programs at the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas – Little Rock, the University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and Arkansas Tech University, and meets quarterly with the universities to provide vocational rehabilitation field updates, and to give practitioner input.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities, and encourages students to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns. These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.

ARS partners in job fairs, maintains a positive relationship with the community and its representatives, and utilizes online recruitment efforts.

ARS provides staff training, especially to those providing direct services to clients. Professional qualifications for counselors are monitored to ensure current certification and to track educational progress for those achieving certification.

### 3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

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

The State of Arkansas has no established standards that apply to the VR counselor position. However, ARS has a goal for all rehabilitation counseling positions to meet the Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling with Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) standard. The agency seeks to hire MRC/CRC counselors as a first priority. In situations where the agency is unable to recruit and hire an MRC/CRC, ARS has a minimum hiring standard of a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study related to vocational rehabilitation counseling or a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation plus a minimum of one year of demonstrated work or service experience in a vocational rehabilitation setting.

Individuals employed as counselors who have not achieved the MRC/CRC designation or standard are provided ongoing training to prepare for the CRC and/or MRC.

**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.**

The Deputy Chief of Field Services reviews curriculum for Rehabilitation Counseling higher education programs and provides input on current educational needs for incoming counselors.

The ARS Commissioner is a member of the WIOA Board, the Chief of Field Services is a member of the executive WIOA Committee, and rehab area managers are members of the local workforce boards. These individuals provide updates on labor force initiatives at both the state and local levels to agency personnel. They also have the responsibility of educating other board members about the needs of individuals with disabilities.

### 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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

**A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING**

IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Staff is provided training opportunities through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association Training Conference, Special Topics Training, Administrative Assistants Training Conference, online training, and webinars. Training is also available through the state Interagency Training Agency, the University of Arkansas CURRENTS program, CRC training, CEU training for purposes of certification or licensure in the professions, and training provided internally by the agency in case management and policy and procedures compliance.

Employees have opportunities to complete the Facilitating Career Development program through the National Career Development Association, which provides relevant skills and knowledge to assist clients in planning careers and obtaining meaningful work.

Access and Accommodations works with counselors in collaboration with ICAN and community partners to provide training about assistive technology and related programs and services available to clients to assist in the home, at work, or in school.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

While findings from the 2019 CSNA indicated the leadership team is very well-trained and boasts an excellent core group of field counselors, there is a need for training throughout the organization, but in particular for counselors in the areas of serious mental health issues and autism. The survey team recommended ARS give a higher level of concentration to training needs, and use survey methods to identify training needs for each employee level. The CSNA also indicated employees feel the agency leadership could do a better job of communicating with rank and file staff. Staff was often unaware of changes even when those changes affected their work directly.

The agency enables employees to attend classes, seminars, and conferences, and disseminates information through newsletters, in-service training, workshops, and conferences. The field program conducts monthly area meetings. Topics include the latest techniques for providing services to clients, updates on statewide performance measures, and guidance on other WIOA initiatives. The field program has outlined four regional trainings to address chronic mental illness and autism topics, which will enable counselors to increase their knowledge and better understand mental health identifiers, treatment, and medications, and better understand support systems for individuals with autism. Additionally, field staff will have access to seminars, conferences, and in-service training on mental health and autism topics.

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.

ARS provides access and contracts as needed to employ personnel who communicate in the native languages of applicants and clients with limited English speaking ability. ARS also provides special communication modes such as interpreters, captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services, and materials for individuals who are deaf and deaf-blind, as well as other specialized

media systems for individuals with disabilities. Interpreters are provided for the deaf or hearing impaired. Sign language skills are included as a minimum qualification for positions providing services to persons who are deaf or hearing impaired.

## 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.

ARS staff participates in state, regional, and national transition meetings and conferences. ARS Field Program staff serves on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP) Team and attends the annual National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Conference. In addition, they help plan, coordinate, and facilitate the bi-annual State Transition Summit, and help lead the planning and coordination of local transition fairs and parent's nights with assistance from rehab area managers and local VR counselors. AITP promotes personnel development through online training for teachers, students, and families, and through an annual Summer Agency Connection, which includes ARS rehab area managers, ACTI, Access and Accommodations personnel, and representatives from high schools. AITP maintains a directory of services provided by ARS and other stakeholders.

### J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

#### 1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

##### A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The most recent Arkansas Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment was completed in April 2019. ARS contracted with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville who worked collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council, key stakeholders, and ARS to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. Multiple data gathering strategies were used including focus group discussions with clients and participants from ARS, SRC, key stakeholders, vendors, employers, and ACDC administrators and staff, and structured surveys were sent to all ARS counselors, a random sample of clients, employers, and ARS leadership.

#### Findings

Individuals with the most significant disabilities were the largest underserved group, and supported employment and transition services were consistently listed as most needed services.

#### Recommendations

- ARS should continue to work across departments and agencies to increase funding for the provision of supported employment and transition services.
- ARS should increase training for CRPs, specifically to address the fear families have about the loss of benefits when individuals achieve competitive integrated employment.

- ARS should explore ways for CRPs to play a more vital role in providing supported employment services across the state.

#### B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

##### Findings

Hispanic/Latino clients who do not speak English as a first language were identified as needing interpreters provided by ARS, in order to ensure that counselor-client communications are effective.

##### Recommendation

- ARS must make stronger efforts to locate interpreters who will be available for applicants who do not use English as their primary language.

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

##### Findings

Data collected through focus groups as well as online surveys revealed that racial and ethnic minorities experienced barriers when seeking VR services. Certain geographic areas were considered underserved, including the Delta Region counties, the Southeast quadrant of the state, and some counties in Northeast Arkansas.

##### Recommendations

- ARS must pursue the expansion of services to geographically underserved areas of the state as well as the underserved populations.
- ARS must expand its outreach to these populations to overcome a lack of trust in state government, which is common in the underserved geographic regions.

##### Findings regarding Center for Independent Living

Arkansas' Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are required to provide five core services: peer support, information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, and transition. There are four CILs operating in the state located in Fayetteville (SOURCES), Little Rock (Mainstream Living), Whitehall (Delta Resources), and Hot Springs (SAILS). CILs work hard to provide outreach and to serve individuals from outlying areas who are most in need, but they only cover 25 of the 75 counties in Arkansas.

The CILs work cooperatively and maintain courteous relationships, but have very few collaborative programs. The CILs advocate strongly for their clients; however, there is little intentional integration between CILs and the VR system. For example, counselors were unaware that one Center provides transition services in public schools in their service area, and both counselors and rehab area managers were unaware that SOURCES manages the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant and employs five Community Work Incentive Coordinators throughout the state to provide benefits counseling.

The CILs provide excellent services and embrace the philosophy people with disabilities are the experts on their needs, and therefore, they must take the initiative, individually and collectively, in

designing and promoting better solutions, and must organize themselves to work together for those solutions. To fully live in this philosophy, Arkansas' CILs must work more closely together to advocate for expanded IL services in Arkansas.

#### Recommendations

- CILs should work with the VR system and specifically with ARS to become a fully integrated and intentional partner with the agency. There are a number of valuable services provided by the CILs not fully understood by the agency; when there is understanding and collaboration, it is too often centered with senior management and is not known or understood by the rank and file counselors and staff across the state.
- A CIL representative should be a member of the State Rehabilitation Council. It is not enough to have a SILC representative on the council, since the CILs and SILC are separate and distinct entities.
- CILs should work closely with ARS and act as advocates for additional funding to operationalize a fifth CIL in the state. It is not acceptable to have the majority of Arkansas' counties located outside of a CIL service area.

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

#### Findings

ARS has taken a leadership role in developing and maintaining partnerships with WIOA partners. The creation and ongoing review of the WIOA state plan is one example of the collaboration and cooperation among the partners. However, the most frequently stated concern with the Workforce/ARS partnership revolves around the "no wrong door" concept, which hinges on the development of a common intake system. Workforce applicants with disabilities, who are transferred to co-located ARS counselors, provide duplicative information to initiate the ARS application, since the two agencies have not developed a common intake system. The ARS IT staff continue to work for a better system.

#### Recommendations

- ARS leadership should continue to take a leadership role in the WIOA partnership efforts.
- ARS should push for the development of a shared database to eliminate the significant workload added to ARS counselors and support staff to duplicate information already provided by the consumer to a WIOA partner.

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

#### Findings

ARS provides transition and Pre-ETS services across the state, and meets the WIOA requirement to utilize at least 15% of the state's VR funding to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in

transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS recruits and contracts with CRPs and willing public school districts.

### Recommendations

- ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.

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

### Findings

It has taken several years for Community Rehabilitation Programs in Arkansas to accept and embrace the need to meet federal and state guidelines as outlined in Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act; however, they now are working to become compliant by providing access to mandated career counseling and information and referral services to their program participants, and by working with the ARS monitoring unit.

If ARS is to successfully meet the needs of individuals who have significant disabilities throughout the state, the network of CRPs will be critical partners. The agency has done a good job of communicating the new requirements and of setting deadlines for their implementation, but this is just the first step in the process. Initiating the second step in the transformation of the CRP network is no less important to the provision of needed services. It is imperative for ARS to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and support within the CRP network.

### Recommendations

- ARS and representatives from the CRPs should meet and work together to create a path forward for these programs. Potential service additions and changes must meet the expanding needs of Arkansas' citizens with disabilities as defined by ARS, while providing an expanded array of services and funding options for CRPs. Opportunities for CRPs include:
- Expanded Supported Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities. ARS can assume a more active role in the development of additional funding sources for initial Supported Employment services as well as long-term supports when needed. Possible partnerships with DDS should be sought.
- Expanded School to Work Transition and Pre-ETS opportunities. ARS' challenge is to explore ways to utilize CRPs to expand these services. One example is for CRPs to partner in the OWL program.
- Partnering with the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) to provide training and certification programs in local communities. ACDC staff would be responsible for maintaining certifications for existing programs, as well as expanding those offerings as resources warrant, and for monitoring the training services provided in the communities. CRP staff could provide the hands-on, day-to-day supports to help clients master the training ACDC provides.
- Additional training programs for CRP staff. ARS should work with CRPs to identify specific training needs and then develop and make available training presentations in affordable and accessible formats in local communities.

### Findings regarding Arkansas Career Training Institute

ACTI had a dedicated staff who worked hard to seek and earn national certifications for their program offerings. ACTI leadership actively explored apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In addition, ACTI staff established and provided innovative programs for transition-aged youth including the Transition Employment Program (TEP). This comprehensive pre-employment training service provided Arkansas high school students with disabilities who have completed the 11th grade with job exploration counseling, work-based learning opportunities, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, and instruction in self-advocacy. In just a few short years, the enrollment in the TEP has grown and has proven to be an excellent tool for motivating students to think more broadly about their options after high school.

However, downsides to operating ACTI under a twenty-four hour, residential model were identified: the distance clients travelled from most areas of the state to attend ACTI; the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment; the perception in the local communities that ACTI did not accept referrals who have significant disabilities; and ACTI's annual budget, which was approximately one-third of the total ARS services budget.

### Recommendations regarding Arkansas Career Training Institute

In response to these findings, ACTI began transformation into ACDC. One of the major changes with this transformation was the elimination of the residential component and consolidating of central services away from the main campus located at 105 Reserve Street in Hot Springs to 200 Reserve Street in Hot Springs. The consolidation of equipment, personnel, and other resources necessitated the need for some renovation of the Armory Building located at 200 Reserve Street along with the construction of a structure to support welding training.

The new model used at ACDC is focused on four program areas:

- *Vocational Rehabilitation Support Services*
- *Career and Technical Education Programs*
- *Pre-Employment Career Development and Transition Services*
- *Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship*

**Vocational Rehabilitation Support Services:** These services are needed to provide evaluation of students to ensure their educational goals are attainable. In addition, staff members will provide detailed information to students with disabilities about training, education, and career opportunities. This will assist the students and their VR counselors across the state to develop better individual plans for employment. In addition, it will assist with referrals for individuals with disabilities that are currently working in sub-minimum wage, with training, education, and career options available that lead to competitive integrated employment.

**Career and Technical Education Programs:** The programs are needed to provide skills and knowledge to people with disabilities to help them achieve competitive integrated employment. A brief description of the training area is listed below:

- **Customer Service and Retail.** This program covers the basic aspect of careers in retail with a focus on customer service. In addition, there is a retail lab and externship developed



jointly with CVS pharmacy. Students completing this program will be prepared for jobs in retail and those requiring high levels of customer service. Also, it gives them access to industry specific training for jobs under the corporate umbrella of CVS. It should be noted CVS is one of the largest health care/retail organizations in the world.

- **Construction Technology.** Home Repair and Maintenance: covers basic skills and techniques used in carpentry, plumbing, electricity, and other building trades. The optional module on electrical construction is a complete orientation to the electrical trade, giving students a competitive edge as an apprentice electrician.
- **Welding.** This program has two eight-week modules, which allow students to learn in-demand skills that lead to jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors.
- **Environmental Services.** This three-week program provides fundamental training in environmental services and prepares students with the skills needed for entry level jobs in environmental services. Also, by stacking other training, they will be able to move from diverse careers in multiple industry sectors.
- **Automotive Maintenance Technology.** This eight-week program focuses on safety and routine maintenance items, tire repair, oil and filter service, belts, hoses and the like. It has been designed to allow students to enter the automotive workplace quickly and build skills on the job.
- **Culinary Arts.** This eight-week course is designed to train students as food service workers in cafeterias, hospitals, restaurants or other food service facilities. Students will follow a scheduled rotation that provides training in Food Safety, Personal Hygiene, Food Preparation, Ingredients, Dishwashing, and Proper Food Storage. This increases opportunities for competitive integrated employment of students with significant disabilities, as well as opens the door for internships and other employer-based training opportunities across the state.
- **Certified Nursing Assistant Training.** There are three, six and seven week options for this program depending on the classes. The classes provide students with the practical application of basic care skills and the required theory training for nursing assistants, per the rules and regulations of the Office of Long Term Care of Arkansas. In addition, the course articulates with a registered apprenticeship program, which provides an additional learn as you earn opportunity.

**Pre-Employment Career Development and Transition Services:** These services are needed to enhance knowledge of competitive integrated employment opportunities in the state and develop skills needed for employment or to further post-secondary education and training. With the passage of the WIOA, Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities is a required service to be coordinated with and provided to all high schools.

ACDC will provide and facilitate pre-employment transition services including career exploration and work-based learning. The areas include:

- ServSafe Food Handler Program
- Professional Guest Services

- Certified Production Technician
- Certified Logistics Technician
- OSHA 10-hour Outreach
- Security Guard

**Pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship:** ACDC has been working with several registered apprenticeship programs that are related to current career and technical education provided on campus. The property allows adequate space and opportunity to conduct pre-apprenticeship training for students to prepare for registered apprenticeship and careers in trades that are in demand in the state. The partnership with registered apprenticeship allows for greater opportunities for the students served on the property while limiting redundant education and training provided by local educational entities. This also has the added benefit of helping registered apprenticeship programs meet the requirement of 29 CFR 30.7, which requires programs to recruit and include people with disabilities.

ARS ceased operation of ACTI as a residential program to which selected individuals are referred, and adopted a different business model to provide an array of supports to individuals throughout the state that is fiscally sustainable. The new model is known as the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC).

ACTI transformed from a residential program housing a variety of training programs in one central location, to a team of experts facilitating training and credentialing programs across the state through CRPs, High Schools, and Core Workforce Partners. This “hub and spoke” model retains the core group of training staff and credentialing experts. By establishing the “hub and spoke” model, ACDC will provide an effective response to the three major negative viewpoints cited in this study. First, since these programs would be offered closer to home, individuals will no longer be forced to travel long distances and live in a residential setting to participate in ACDC certification programs. Second, the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment in ACTI programs would be eliminated. There should be an exponential increase in the number of individuals served by these certification programs through partnerships with the network of CRPs, High Schools and Core Workforce Partners, thereby reducing the waiting time for enrollment. Finally, the addition of hands-on support from well-trained CRP staffers to provide assistance to individuals enrolled in the local programs would make completion and certification accessible to individuals with more significant disabilities.

ACDC is seeking out and developing partnerships with existing CRPs throughout the state to create specific training programs similar to those currently being offered at the residential facility.

ACDC continues to develop and expand ancillary programs like TEP, and aggressively pursue apprenticeship programs that could be incorporated into the CRP, High School, and Core Workforce partnership model.

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

## Findings

ARS has worked diligently to provide transition and Pre-ETS services across the state, and has met the WIOA requirement that at least 15% of the state's vocational rehabilitation funding be used to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS management and field staff have worked tirelessly to recruit CRPs and willing public school districts with whom to contract in order to meet the requirement. However, to meet the 15% benchmark quickly, ARS allowed some Pre-ETS providers to pay students for "work experience" placements for as much as 20 hours per week. While this incentive worked well in terms of recruiting employers and providers, based on the estimated 17,700 individuals with disabilities who received supports in 2018 is not sustainable for the long term unless the total number of individuals served is reduced.

## Recommendations

- ARS leadership, in consultation with providers and school personnel, should set a lower number of hours for work experience. ARS must make some significant changes in order to continue an acceptable level of services. ARS partners, CRPs and school districts, have allowed some students to work as much as 20 hours per week, with ARS paying those wages, which is not sustainable, nor in line with best practices. The purpose of the Pre-ETS program is to provide paid work experience. It is not to create long term jobs for these students. A series of work site experiences, averaging eight hours per week, for an expanded number of students, would provide the desired workplace exposure. Adjustments must be made to the structure of the program to ensure its sustainability, and the sustainability and viability of the existing VR program.
- ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.
- ARS should continue to negotiate with public schools and the Department of Education to increase the portion of transition costs paid through IDEA.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

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

In Arkansas, out of a total of 1,767,266 non-institutionalized population aged 18 to 64, there are 275,710 individuals with disabilities. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Table B18121: Work Experience by Disability Status and Type, from the 2018 American Community Survey.

### 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

#### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

ARS estimates 16,700 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services and 3,000 youth will receive pre-employment transition services.

#### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

ARS estimates 375 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive supported employment services.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services 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.

The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services is \$13.9 million for VR services and \$6.7 million for pre-employment transition services. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

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

ARS and the State Rehabilitation Council developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for PY2020-2021.

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

The purpose of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is to assist Arkansans with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment. The goals and priorities identified to support this purpose are:

**Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.**

Priorities:

- ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.
- ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.
- ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

**Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.**

Priorities

- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.

- ARS will provide Pre-ETS and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.
- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS utilizing the resources at ACDC. The new model focuses resources to serve students with disabilities to prepare and guide them toward achieving competitive integrated employment.
- ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work-ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

**Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.**

Priorities:

- ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.
- ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.
- ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping the employees with disabilities on the job.

**Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.**

Priorities:

- ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.
- ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.
- ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.
- Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.
- ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and by making the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

**Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.**

Priorities:

- ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.

- ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.
- ARS transformed ACTI to a new service delivery model, ACDC. This model focuses as a hub for training and services to support VR consumers and/or students with disabilities to successfully reach the milestones of their individual plans for employment.

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

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

Using data from the 2019 CSNA, ARS and the SRC developed the goals and priorities listed in Section L.2 above.

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

The performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA are addressed in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance requirements, under the priorities: ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures, and ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

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.

Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council contributed to the development of Goals and Priorities as outlined previously. ARS' existing strategic plan was also utilized.

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

ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection. However, in the event that available vocational rehabilitation funding cannot support the full range of services for all eligible individuals, the ARS Commissioner will initiate a structured process to move to an Order of Selection. This process will include public participation and comment, notification to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

An Order of Selection requires that priority be given to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. Therefore, after determining eligibility, ARS counselors will determine the client's priority for services based on the significance of the client's disability using the categories defined below.

Priority Category I – Most Significantly Disabled

An individual with a most significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits at least four functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category II – Significantly Disabled

An individual with a significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category III – Non-Significantly Disabled

An individual with a non-significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or two functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocation rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates that individuals who are receiving services under Individualized Plans for Employment at the time the Order is implemented will continue to receive services through closure of their cases.

**B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER**

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

**C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS**

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

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

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

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

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

**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**

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates serving all eligible individuals requiring specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

**N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS**

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ARS addresses the provision of supported employment services in Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.

Priority – ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Target individuals with the most significant disabilities to provide customized employment, supported employment, and other individualized services.
- Collaborate with qualified vendors, community partners, and employers to expand supported employment initiatives.
- Continue to partner with other state agencies to provide collaborative services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Priority – ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.

Strategies - ARS will:

- Develop a community employment advisory committee.
- Develop partnership resources with other state agencies, provider associations and advocacy organizations to expand employment opportunities, transportation access, funding for extended services, and/or wrap around services for individuals not on Medicaid waiver.

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

ARS sets aside 50 percent of supportive employment funds specifically for youth programs that support competitive integrated employment.

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.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Determine methods for funding extended services for youth with disabilities not to exceed four years through the Employment First Vendors (CRPs, SE providers, and other external employment).



- Develop new service components or agreements with partners of state agencies for sequential funding of extended services to assure youth with disabilities have successful employment opportunities.
- Provide education and instruction of WIOA expectations to providers, and will establish Memorandums of Understanding or contract services to providers to initiate services to potentially eligible clients.

## 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

ARS addresses the methods to be used to expand/improve services in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Work with WIOA partners to establish a common intake process that streamlines client application for services across partner programs.
- Collaborate with WIOA partners' field staff statewide to provide information and awareness about vocational rehabilitation services.
- Host partners' training conferences to provide education and resources available for potential clients.
- Partner with local Hispanic and Marshallese communities to increase awareness and availability of services.
- Collaborate with other partners to more effectively reach the deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide information about ARS services in the geographically underserved areas.

### 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

Field Services staff receives training to determine whether a client would benefit from the provision of assistive technology services and devices at each stage of the rehabilitation process. As appropriate, counselors refer clients to ARS' Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs for assessment and consultation regarding the need for assistive technology as it relates to the achievement of their vocational goals. Counselors are

also aware of services addressing the Arkansas Assistive Technology Act of 1998 offered by ICAN and the associated AFP.

ARS addresses the provision of assistive technology services for individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and make the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Make the assistive technology/AT@Work referral available in the CMS at the time of intake, plan development, placement, and post-employment checks.
- Train staff on the assistive technology services available to clients.
- Make application forms for various community service programs dealing with assistive technology available in the CMS.

ARS also addresses this provision in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping employees with disabilities on the job.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Increase the overall number of SAW/RTW and Job Retention clients.
- Increase the number of employer referrals for SAW/RTW services.
- Incorporate SAW/RTW services when business engagement staff interacts with businesses.

### 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

ARS will address outreach procedures in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Partner with local Hispanic and Marshallese communities to increase awareness and availability of services.

- Collaborate with other partners to more effectively reach the deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide information about ARS services in the geographically underserved areas.

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)

ARS addresses pre-employment transition services in Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Create internships in competitive integrated settings that could lead to on-the-job training and/or job placement.
- Identify industry recognized curriculums and train counselors to utilize it with students.
- Develop partnerships by contacting Special Education personnel in schools and by attending school board meetings.
- Create and implement marketing campaigns.
- Create standards and benchmarks evaluation criteria for each core service for vendors, schools, and counselors to use in identifying the knowledge/skills/abilities gained by students in the program.
- Increase awareness of viable work options in the areas where students live.
- Create a peer mentorship program including mentoring with CILS.
- Create a Professional Advisors Learning Series (PALS) where professionals in a field provide hands-on demonstrations to students on the work in that field, offer job shadowing opportunities, and informational interviews on the job duties.
- Promote and track employment outcomes directly from Pre-ETS services.

Priority – ARS will provide pre-employment transition services and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into vocational rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Spend at least 15% of VR grant on Pre-ETS.
- Direct students with disabilities into classes leading to certifications in Career and Technical Education and concurrent enrollment postsecondary training while in high school.

- Provide students in Pre-ETS with paid and unpaid work experiences.
- Provide students participating in Pre-ETS with career portfolios upon exiting high school.
- Provide Pre-ETS core services internally or by utilizing external contractors.
- Develop and implement a process for Pre-ETS students to become traditional VR services clients and monitor results.

Priority – ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and support apprenticeships for students prior to graduation.
- Increase credential attainments in high school by moving Pre-ETS-VR ready students to VR services prior to graduation.
- Develop and support on-the-job trainings/direct job placement and supported employment with businesses that have Pre-ETS internship sites.

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

ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model. ACDC's continual operation will be critical for ARS to meet needs of potentially eligible and eligible individuals with disabilities who live in the rural and other parts of the State. ACDC will provide skilled training and other coordination services for individuals with disabilities that lead to competitive integrated employment. The continual maintenance and improvement of ACDC will be necessary to maintain its operation in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible.

Priority – ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model, ACDC.

Strategies – Through ACDC, ARS will:

- Develop a new organizational structure consistent with meeting the demands of the new model, which will address:
  1. Career and Technical Education training programs to meet the needs of students and labor market demands.
  2. Pre-apprenticeship training programs to facilitate placement in USDOL approved registered apprenticeship programs.
  3. Registered apprenticeships.
  4. Pre-employment transition and career development services to assist students in transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.
  5. Talent development for Pre-ETS and Transition customers.

6. Co-developing programming with Field Services to assist students in achieving career goals including identifying needed accommodations in postsecondary education and employment.
- Obtain resources to support direct and facilitated provision of training and vocational rehabilitation services at the central location in Hot Springs and with partners across the state.
- Develop a new plan for marketing and branding the new program model.

Priority – ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.

Strategy – Through ACDC, ARS will:

- Transition career counseling services from a contracted external provider to internal provision.

#### 6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

The Quality Assurance (QA) team ensures statewide consistency in state and federal vocational rehabilitation compliance issues by providing information to support the delivery of comprehensive services in order to prepare individuals with disabilities to enter and to remain in the workforce. The QA team monitors and reviews the field program for policy compliance by randomly selecting cases from specific categories for on-site review. Throughout the year, the QA team provides case management training during new counselor orientation training, and financial resources training.

ARS addresses performance accountability measures in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize all available data to monitor performance outcomes.
- ARS Field staff will receive ongoing performance accountability measurement training.

Priority – ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- (The QA team will) monitor and review randomly selected cases from specific categories for on-site review.
- Train personnel on acceptable data verification criteria and acceptable documentation.
- Collaborate with DSB to establish consistent documentation practices for data verification.

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

ARS addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Continue to market to employers how ARS can be an effective resource as it relates to the hiring of individuals with disabilities and assisting them in remaining in the workforce.
- Maintain its partnership with Disability: IN - Arkansas, and assist in membership recruitment by leveraging partnerships with existing business customers.
- Work with employers to identify opportunities for pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, and On-the-Job programs.

Priority – ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize state agency transformation to expand relationships with partner agencies within the Department of Commerce.
- Continue to advance relationships with other WIOA partners at both the state and local levels.
- Conduct joint business service team meetings with all Workforce Development Boards.
- Develop products and services that meet individual business customer needs.
- Work with local workforce boards to identify local in demand occupations.
- Work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, work-based learning opportunities, and apprenticeships.

ARS also addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and implement a Job Club initiative and collaborate with counselors to support clients in honing soft skills to enhance job readiness.

- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market information so clients are trained for employment with in-demand industries in order to create opportunities for sustainable employment.
- Work with counselors to develop a mechanism to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Develop career pathways with input from private industries and educational training providers in the state.

Priority – Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market information and regional sector strategies.
- Train counselors to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Host statewide training to insure understanding of policy and procedures.
- Provide training on special populations to include those with serious mental illness and autism spectrum disorders.

Priority – ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Conduct partner meetings with educational training providers on a quarterly basis to foster stronger relationships.
- Participate in business and industry Expo/Chamber events with other workforce partners.
- Participate in monthly “Core-Four” partner’s meetings with other WIOA partners.
- Seek opportunities for rehab area managers and counselors to collaborate with BEU staff through joint business customer visits to meet employer needs.
- Train field personnel on apprenticeships/pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and paid work experiences available for students and youth.
- (Rehab area managers will) access local workforce board funding and resources to utilize as a similar benefit in service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to Arkansas businesses by consistently providing services that meet the employers’ needs.

Strategies – Business Engagement will:

- Utilize Salesforce CRM as licenses are issued to share information with partner agencies to more effectively serve business customers.
- Implement a customer satisfaction survey to measure the effectiveness of services offered to business customers.

## 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

ARS and the SRC jointly developed the goals, priorities, and strategies based on input provided by the most recent CSNA and input from key stakeholders. ARS has developed a strategic plan that supports the goals, priorities, and strategies. The strategies are intended to position ARS to successfully meet WIOA performance requirements, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided to agency clients including those who are unserved or underserved, and to create opportunities to enhance relationships with employers, community organizations, and WIOA partners.

### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

As required, ARS will reserve and use a portion of its funds for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The provision of transition/pre-employment transition services is anticipated to be a targeted area. Establishing more effective and efficient ways to serve the unserved and underserved, another. ARS will continue to utilize innovation and expansion funds to support the State Rehabilitation Council as well as the State Independent Living Council.

### C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

ARS recognizes that providing Arkansans with disabilities equitable access and the opportunity to fully participate in its programs and services is and has been an ongoing issue as evidenced by results from the most recent CSNA where the unserved/underserved populations of Hispanics and the deaf/hard of hearing were specifically mentioned. In addition, ARS recognizes, geographically, a significant part of the state is rural and the availability of services is limited including supported employment. ARS believes the following goals will address this issue: Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities; Goal 4: ARS will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery; and Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of community rehabilitation and supported employment providers to achieve employment outcomes. The intent is to provide more opportunities for these populations to participate in services provided or sponsored by ARS.

### P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

#### A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

**Goal 1:** To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.



- ARS will increase referrals, enhance job development and placement services, and recruit qualified rehabilitation counselors to fill vacancies to meet or exceed past performance in employment outcomes.
- ARS will increase performance in Supported Employment for youth and adults with disabilities with emphasis on serving an increased number of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including developmental/intellectual, behavioral health concerns and cognitive disabilities.
- ARS will provide training to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations in order to improve performance.

**Goal 1: Evaluation and Progress**

For PY2018 as reported on the ETA-9169, ARS had a second quarter employment rate of 56.3%. Median earning were \$5,240.93, and measurable skill gains were at a rate of 25.2%.

ARS:

- Increased referrals from 4,863 in PY2017 to 5,258 in PY2018, which is an 8.12 % increase. Counselor vacancies decreased from 17% to 4.5%.
- Field program set aside 50% of supportive employment dollars to engage youth and provide vocational services. Youth services increased by 3% and adult services by 5%.
- Hosted ten trainings to improve consumer awareness about ARS services. Other topics covered during the trainings included transportation, employment opportunities, and job development preparation.

**Goal 2: Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.**

- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) team, is receiving technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy subject matter experts on methods to use Medicaid Waivers and other partners' funds in restructuring to expand and improve SE services. The team includes: The Department of Human Services Divisions of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Behavioral Health Services (DBHS), Services for the Blind (DSB), Medical Services (DMS), Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), Department of Workforce Services (DWS), and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU).
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will initiate revised MOUs based on the WIOA, including new rates and reimbursement methodology for braiding services.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will provide technical assistance to the pilot projects focused on transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.

**Goal 2: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Met with the EFSLMP team to focus on implementing streamlined supported employment services, to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to continue provider transformation, and to transition facility-based services (subminimum wage) to community-based services through funds provided by a 2018 Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Programs (DOL ODEP) grant.
- With the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Service (DDS) piloted and implemented sequential funding of supported employment services utilizing streamlined services, provider requirements, and outcome payments to secure competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding along with the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit and the Arkansas Department of Human Services' divisions of Aging and Adult Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Medical Services. The MOU provides guidelines for the necessary coordination between state agencies to ensure competitive integrated employment is the preferred option for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, who are eligible for more than one publicly funded program administered by the parties to this MOU.
- In partnership with DHS – DDS, through the DOL ODEP grant, initiated strategies for Arkansas to implement the State Agency Model Employer (SAME.) DHS – DDS piloted the project, and nine individuals with the most significant disabilities became state employees through extra help positions. These individuals are working for DHS, ARS, and the Department of Finance and Administration.

**Goal 3:** Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.

- ARS will continue the marketing plan to increase awareness of VR services to citizens, service providers, and business and industry, and to increase employment outcomes to improve performance accountability measures.
- Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN, State AT Program) will provide a new informational website to provide resources for accommodation and assistive technology as it relates to home, education, and employment.
- ARS will develop outreach strategies designed to improve access to VR services for the state's Hispanic residents with disabilities. Field personnel will distribute materials and information in a variety of formats designed to reach and serve the growing diverse population in Arkansas.
- ARS will develop educational and informational materials designed to inform potential referral sources about the referral process and the scope of ARS.
- ARS will utilize its network of Community Rehabilitation Programs to identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.

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### **Goal 3: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Improved service provision within the Hispanic population by providing informational resources and pamphlets in Spanish, and by providing Spanish translators and interpreters for Spanish speaking clients.
- Launched a new website for the State AT Program, ICAN, to provide Arkansans in need of assistive technology and accommodation solutions better access to information, training, technical assistance, and devices to assist them in remaining independent in the home, with education, and with employment. For this reporting period 7,252 individual users accessed the website viewing 22,061 different pages, and performing 4,059 searches within the website.
- Updated marketing materials, and provided education and outreach for ACDC through Twitter posts and ACDC success stories in agency publications. Communications also updated the ACDC webpage on the agency website, and forwarded public comments and questions from the website comment link to ACDC staff for review. ACDC Staff members provided education and outreach to high schools across the state, attended job fairs, and communicated with internal and external partners.
- Found it not feasible at this time to collect data on CRPs who identify individuals who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language might benefit from ARS services and other support services.

### **Goal 4: Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes.**

- ACDC will work to expand the success of registered apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities for ARS clients.
- ARS has developed the statewide business and industry advisory board and implemented the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). ARS will expand and grow TAP to increase job potential for agency customers.
- ARS will increase the number of business relations representatives to provide job placement services in all Field Services offices and ACDC.
- A statewide advisory group will be established and composed of individuals from business and industry, counselors, job placement specialists, and other appropriate professionals to explore participating in the National Employment Team.
- ARS will actively support the development of the Arkansas Business Leadership Network. ARS will continue to meet with companies from across the state throughout the year to garner support and identify an anchor employer(s) to facilitate the application process.
- The local business advisory group at ACDC will be integrated into the statewide ARS business advisory group with the goal of expanding job placement and employment outcomes.

- ARS will enhance relationships with businesses whose corporate offices are headquartered in Arkansas and partner with senior corporate officers and managers. Through a dedicated full-time corporate business relations consultant, ARS will be positioned to build relationships with key decision makers as well as connect with the State Chamber of Commerce to solidify its status as an economic contributor and not just a social service provider.
- ARS will actively market ARS' Business Relations services to companies seeking qualified applicants with disabilities.
- ARS will develop and initiate activities and events to recognize individuals who have overcome their disabilities, and give recognition to employers and businesses, who have demonstrated "best practices," hired people with disabilities, and made unique and cost-effective reasonable accommodations.
- ARS will develop a presentation to advocate the benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.
- ARS will update promotional/educational videos, brochures, mailers, etc., and target businesses.
- District managers will partner with business relations representatives to effectively market ARS services to business and industry, performing an intentional and active role on the business relations team.
- ARS will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of current marketing strategies and how ARS is currently engaging employers.
- Through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work program, the Access and Accommodations team will continue to be a resource for employers and employees for expertise in seeking information on providing accommodation and comprehensive assistive technology evaluations.

#### **Goal 4: Evaluation and Progress**

- Expanded apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities, engaged in pre-apprenticeship activities with business members of the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and expanded the registered apprenticeship program to include people with disabilities and added new occupations such as Certified Nursing Assistants, Medical Administrative Assistants, and Information Technology Generalist. There were challenges to provide these opportunities across the state and VR consumer participation was less than optimal.
- Continued its efforts to integrate the ACDC local business advisory group into the statewide ARS business advisory group to expand job placement and employment outcomes.

ARS:

- Partnered with Arkansas Support Network and WIOA Partners (Division of Services for the Blind and Adult Education) to host ten career fairs across the state.
- Supported the growth of Disability: IN – Arkansas with core partners (JB Hunt, Tyson, TJX, Walmart, and Regions Bank).

#### The Business Engagement Unit:

- Revamped print and digital marketing materials to reflect the needs and perspective of employers, changing the emphasis from supply to demand.
- Developed a presentation geared to employers, which presents a business case for creating an inclusive workforce, and covers return on investment, human capital, market, diversity, innovation, and ARS services.
- In partnership with CSAVR, developed a promotional PSA video outlining the no cost services ARS can provide employers. The video can be accessed on the ARS website.
- Facilitated the Fourth Annual Arkansas Business Employment Summit in 2018, which focused on empowering all through inclusion. During the Summit, companies demonstrating best practices in hiring people with disabilities were recognized through various awards including the Distinguished Partnership Award, the Business Partnership Award of the Year, the Leadership Award, and the Community Partnership Award.
- Received technical assistance from the Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC) to strengthen relationships with ARS field offices, which resulted in counselors, rehab area managers, and senior management accompanying Business Engagement representatives on scheduled business visits. This collaboration encouraged a shared understanding of the “bigger picture” of job-driven vocational rehabilitation, which led to a shift in the collective thinking on the alignment of client skill attainment with skills actually needed in the job market.
- Assisted counselors in obtaining the latest labor market information to assist the client in developing an effective IPE.
- Presented with Field personnel information to employers about job training experiences, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for transitional students. For example, The Fort Smith Business Engagement team met with Answer Fort Smith to design an accommodations training program.
- Is exploring the redesign of its customer satisfaction survey. Currently, employers receive a short email after services are provided to gauge satisfaction and to gain information on how to improve services to business.

#### Access and Accommodations:

- Provided accommodation and assistive technology solutions in the workplace through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program for 72 individual cases from 44 different employers across Arkansas, with 13 of these employers returning multiple employees for services through the program.

**Goal 5:** Expand and improve transition services program.

- ARS has been actively engaged in the development of legislation to implement comprehensive transition and postsecondary education programs in institutions of higher education, and will continue to act as a resource in the development and implementation of postsecondary education programs. ARS will also provide information to clients about these programs.
- ARS will conduct an assessment of transitional services statewide and implement policy and procedures consistent with WIOA.
- ARS will explore combining both transition programs and establish one vision for transition services.
- ARS will develop a transition committee to initiate a statewide plan to provide innovative transition services to students.
- ARS will provide pre-employment transition services such as job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences including internships that provide integrated environments.
- ARS will provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- ARS will provide workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
- ARS will provide instruction in self-advocacy and peer mentoring.
- ARS district managers will work with WIOA partners, school districts, and educational co-ops to enhance working relations to effectively provide transitional services.
- ARS will explore hiring a Transitional Coordinator who will implement strategies of enhancing transitional services and providing statewide training to counselors.
- ARS will work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences to prepare students for the workforce.
- ARS will collaborate with WIOA partners and other state agencies to utilize braided funding for services.
- ARS leadership will work with the State Department of Education to strengthen relationships between schools and rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS leadership will work with school districts throughout the state to facilitate and enhance the working relationships between the local high schools and local rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS will continue to host Transition Expos across the state to market ARS transition services. ARS will continue to partner with Arkansas Transition Services (ATS) to provide technical assistance with transition planning, and will support the bi-annual state Transition Summit for local transition teams and cadre meetings throughout the school year

in an effort to identify local resources and continue to increase awareness of ARS services. ARS will continue to refer clients to College Bound Arkansas to prepare transition students living with a disability for college, will continue to sponsor Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), and will support the annual Disability Awareness activities. ARS will initiate and implement specialty camps available to all students with disabilities designed to focus on pre-employment transition core services.

- ARS counselors will continue to coordinate with special education teachers to identify students with individual education plans to implement transition services prior to the senior year.
- If a student is determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, a plan for employment will be completed prior to graduation.
- The ARS Field Program and the will continue to expand opportunities for young people with disabilities to participate in the four-week, jointly developed Transition Employment Program (TEP) in which students receive a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skill development, and three internship rotations at ACDC.
- ARS will continue to partner with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), and ACCESS Group, Inc. to increase the number of young adults served in the UAMS Project SEARCH® site. In addition, ARS will look for opportunities to increase the number of Project SEARCH® sites by partnering with other community partners. ARS will continue to support the youth model site in Fayetteville in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc., Fayetteville Public Schools, and Washington Regional Medical Center.
- Access and Accommodations will work with counselors, educators, and employers to assist students with disabilities who utilize assistive technology by providing assessments, consultation, and acquisition as part of the transition process from secondary education to postsecondary education and work.
- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology as an accommodation in education and employment settings.

#### **Goal 5: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Assisted the University of Arkansas' Empower Program with the policy and procedural elements of Pre-ETS and traditional Transition services that support the program.
- Developed procedural guidance for counselors, vendors, and schools participating in Pre-ETS, and promulgated policy that supports both the traditional Transition and the Pre-ETS programs. ARS utilizes a model of a continuum of services for Pre-ETS and Transition services, in which the Pre-ETS program is the first step to exploring careers, positive work attitudes and behaviors by using curriculums and activities that instruct on all five Pre-ETS core services. Prior to graduation, students are introduced to their transition counselors,

who work with them using the existing documentation from Pre-ETS to develop plans for employment prior to the student's high school graduation.

- Developed a transition committee that provided input and suggestions to the various models of Pre-ETS currently in place: 1) school-based model, 2) vendor services model, 3) counselor driven direct services model, and 4) camps and forums. Work-based learning/work experiences are conducted in the most integrated setting available. Additionally, 33 schools have performance-based contracts with ARS to provide work-based learning and work readiness training to students in high school.
- Reviewed the curriculum and activities of over 25 vendors and approved 20 vendors that provide direct instruction on counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs. In addition, Pre-ETS counselors received curriculum and instructional activities in this core area that meet the scope of service for counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- Provided self-advocacy training utilizing established curriculum, and provided peer mentoring in group settings by vendors and schools, which is monitored by Pre-ETS counselors.
- Rehab area managers attended WIOA Board meetings, CIRCLES trainings with school districts, and educational co-op trainings.
- Made available paid work experiences to 3,750 students in 150 high schools, which are available after school and on the weekends through 20 vendors statewide.
- Collaborated with school districts to share in the delivery and cost of services. With vendor programs in the school system, schools provide transition services outlined in agreements as the responsibility of the school and carried out by school funding, while vendors provide the Pre-ETS core services not provided by the school. School teachers monitor and oversee the delivery of Pre-ETS core services in their classrooms. With the OWL contracts, schools fund and provide career exploration, self-advocacy, and counseling on postsecondary education, as well as some soft skills training prior to a work experience. ARS funds the work experience and work readiness skills that are taught and reinforced on the job.
- Signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of all agencies working in Pre-ETS and Transition. It emphasizes collaboration between ARS, Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the local school districts.
- Developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district.
- Conducted Transition Expos across the State, and assisted in the planning and training of the Arkansas Transition Services bi-annual State Transition Summit.
- Referred students to College Bound Arkansas. Developed, implemented, and executed the Youth Leadership Forum, and participated in Disability Awareness activities offered by the Statewide Independent Living Council.



- Implemented a Film Camp offered by Joey Travolta's Inclusion Films.
- Ensured all students found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services have plans for employment prior to graduation. Part of the continuum of services in transition is to identify and refer Pre-ETS students to Transition counselors in their senior year so individual plans for employment can be written and implemented for students as they exit high school.
- Provided, through the ARS Transition Program and ACTI, the four-week Transition Employment Program (TEP), where students received a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skills development, self-advocacy instruction, and work-based learning experiences including three internship rotations at ACTI. TEP crossed program years; therefore, participants cannot be calculated strictly by program year. In 2018, TEP was held June 24 – July 20, and had 114 participants with 103 completers (90% completion). In 2019, TEP was held June 23 – July 19, and there were 74 participants with 70 completers (95% completion).
- Partnered with ten Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program to provide on-the-job training consisting of three ten-week internship rotations for all participants. Currently, ARS partners with the ACCESS Group, Inc. to provide Project SEARCH® sites at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Children's Hospital, CHI St. Vincent (Hot Springs and the Hot Springs Lakeside and Fountain Lake School Districts), Ouachita County Medical Center, St. Bernard's Regional Medical Center, Mercy Hospital (Fort Smith), University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and the Bentonville School District at Embassy Suites in Rogers. ARS supports the Washington Regional Medical Center Project SEARCH® site in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc. and the Fayetteville and Springdale School Districts, and with Friendship Community Care, Inc. at the Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center site. There are 115 Arkansas businesses that serve on the Project SEARCH® Business Advisory Council.
- Provided 59 individual trainings through Access and Accommodation staff including ICAN, which included individuals with disabilities, family members or guardians of individuals with disabilities, education representatives, employers, allied health facilities representatives, community living representatives, technology field representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff. Training included the provision and implementation of individual pieces of technology or accommodations and the “dos and don'ts” of providing accommodations in an employment setting.

**Goal 6:** Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

- ARS will continue assigning a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP in each District.
- ARS district managers will assume a more active role with CRPs to develop more positive working relationships.
- ARS will train CRPs on the WIOA requirements for services to youth and students with disabilities as it relates to Section 511 – Limitations on Sub-Minimum Wage.

- ARS will initiate purchased service agreements focused on moving CRPs from fee for service to performance-based outcome payments.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, the Arkansas SRC and the RSA State Liaison, will establish technical assistance guidelines focused on CRPs transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.
- ARS will, in consultation with RSA, develop short-term and long-range maintenance plans for ACDC, a state owned and operated CRP.
- ACDC will continue to utilize the Professional Career Performance Program designed to reinforce positive behaviors essential to attaining and maintaining employment.
- ARS will expand the OSHA ten-hour training as a weeklong stand-alone program.
- A Heavy Equipment Operation program will include a collaborative training agreement with a local two-year college to provide CDL training and licensing as well as a six-week hands-on training on hydraulic excavator simulator.

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#### **Goal 6: Evaluation and Progress**

##### **ARS:**

- Hosted Lunch and Learns to increase quality of relationships with CRPs.
- Provided training on Pre-ETS and job placement, which enabled CRP partners to provide new job placement services, and new Pre-ETS services such as job exploration, postsecondary guidance, and work-based learning in the schools.
- Added 15 new CRP vendors. ARS assigns a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP, and liaisons complete a monthly report to help monitor CRP needs.
- Trained approximately 50 CRPs and 14(c) Certificate holders (65 participants) on WIOA requirements, and ensured the 3,500 employees at 14(c) Organizations received career counseling, information about competitive integrated employment, and referrals as deemed appropriate.
- Initiated new purchased service agreements for community-based services with outcome reimbursement payments.
- Encouraged and provided information to CRPs interested in transformation on how to apply for technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL ODEP) Provider Transformation Program. CRPs also received information on how to utilize the ODEP "Provider Transformation Pilot Version" manual released May 2017.
- ARS, in partnership with DHS – DDS, offered Transformation and Pre-ETS training offered by subject matter experts (SME) to CRPs. Thirty CRPs were trained. In addition, Employment First Strategic Planning was initiated through a SME as part of the DOL ODEP grant.

- Based on results from the annual ACTI monitoring, concluded ACTI should move from a residential services program to a community-based program known as the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC). Short- and long-term maintenance needs indicated the residential model was not cost effective to continue. Initial plan development for the new model is underway.
- Saw a reduction in discharges as a result of utilizing the Professional Career Performance Program, which is designed to reinforce positive behaviors.
- Expanded the OSHA 10 stand-alone program and approximately 200 students have completed the two-day program.
- Discontinued Call Center Training for lack of interest.
- Observed limited interest in CDL training and hands-on hydraulic excavator training.

**Goal 7: Improve training, resources, and continuing education.**

- ARS will review the needs identified in the Training Needs Assessment conducted by ARS Staff Development and Training to identify significant training and continuing education activities.
- Staff Development and Training will coordinate and conduct task force meetings representing a cross section of agency personnel to analyze the identified needs submitted. Information from the task force will be incorporated, if appropriate, into the proposed Career Development Enhancement Program and the employees' training and education plans. Training delivery method will vary depending on the subject matter and all resources available will be considered.
- ARS will train staff to increase awareness related to Employment First (E1st) provider transformation and integrated community-based services as it relates to Community Rehabilitation Programs, Supported Employment Programs, and External Job Placement vendors.
- ARS/ACDC will undertake a feasibility study and memoranda of agreement with Higher Education providers to further the agency's desire to provide continuing education and training for VR clients wishing to pursue higher accreditation in skilled trades and to enhance employment outcomes.
- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology in education and employment settings.

**Goal 7: Evaluation and Progress**

**ARS:**

- Trained staff on the external employment vendor services with the addition of the 2018 implementation of the ARS/DDS service partnership and on how to complete case management.

- Provided information from Field Services management to Staff Development and Training about staff training needs on a monthly basis. Staff Development and Training monitored the effectiveness of the trainings offered and reviewed all training needs with the Employee Engagement Team, a cross section of staff. After discussion with the Employee Engagement Team, the Career Development Enhancement Program was modified.
- Increased online training during 2018.

ACTI:

- Prior to conversion to ACDC, partnered with National Park College to arrange an articulation agreement for the Certified Production Technology class.
- Prior to conversion to ACDC, assisted ACTI students pursuing higher education in obtaining credit for the training completed.

Access and Accommodations/ICAN:

- Partnered with the University of Arkansas' Partners for Inclusive Communities to provide statewide trainings focusing on accessibility of facilities, documentation, and digital media. Those attending included individuals with disabilities, education settings representatives, allied health program representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff.

**Goal 8:** Improve ARS' ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs.

- ARS will reorganize/realign its Special Programs section to better communicate the availability of resources to assist in the accommodation process. As part of this change Special Programs will be renamed Access and Accommodations.
- ARS will rename its Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay-at- Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW). This language is consistent with programs/practices in private/public sector employment and communicates functional intent.
- As part of the Governor's Employment First Task Force, ARS will assume a lead role in the implementation of a SAW/RTW program within Arkansas state government.
- ARS will work with WIOA partners at both the state and local level to support SAW/RTW efforts in both public and private sector employment.
- ARS will sufficiently staff its Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) program to meet referral demands from the ARS Field Program and SAW/RTW initiative. Staff will have expertise to address accommodation needs in training and employment settings.

**Goal 8:** Evaluation and Progress

Access and Accommodations:

- Created the Community Service Program Director position, under Access and Accommodations, which reports to the Associate Commissioner of Access and Accommodations. This position oversees five Community Service Programs, provides guidance and direction, and enables more diligent administration of those programs.

- Renamed the Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/TRW) to better reflect programs/practices in the private/public sector employment and to better communicate functional intent.
- Made presentations and conducted training about SAW/RTW efforts at WIOA partners meeting, State Agency Model Employer (SAME) trainings, and regional Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) trainings.
- Sufficiently staffed AT@ Work by filling one Occupational Therapist position and by transferring one Physical Therapist position formerly located at ACTI to AT@Work.

**Goal 9:** Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients.

- ARS will ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive training for rehab area managers and counselors to effectively serve clients.
- ARS will adequately staff the field program to reduce caseloads and allow counselors to devote additional time to direct consumer contact and provision of services.
- ARS will examine the agency referral sources and ensure counselors are trained to provide effective services to clients with mental health concerns and intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- ARS will increase the role of the rehab area manager in the areas of outreach and marketing at local levels statewide to cultivate positive working relationships with employers, partners, and stakeholders.
- ARS will implement training that will focus on increasing the number of individuals exiting the system with quality employment outcomes.
- ARS will evaluate the Supported Employment services provided statewide and focus on expansion in rural areas.
- ARS will strengthen the relationships with WIOA partners such as Workforce Services, Services for the Blind, Adult Education, and Department of Human Services to better serve agency customers with resources.
- ARS will implement and develop policies for WIOA and provide statewide training for the field program.
- ACDC will evaluate programs on effectiveness and implement new talent development programs that give student's competitive training for the 2020 workforce.
- ACDC will implement efficient communication processes with the field program to ensure counselors are aware of ACDC programs.
- ACDC will improve marketing and outreach to employers, schools, and prospective clients.

**Goal 9:** Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Compiled data on services provided during the FFY2018 to establish baselines for annual service evaluation.
- Trained field staff utilizing the Quality Assurance Department, rehab area managers, Office of Personnel Management, and Staff Development and Training, which reduced data entry error ratios and audit findings.
- Provided training for rehab area managers on the Hidden Rules of Social Class offered by University of Arkansas CURRENTS.
- Reduced the counselor vacancy rate from 17% to 4.5 %, which lowered the caseloads statewide by 5%. The national caseload average is 156 and ARS is at 160 cases per counselor. ARS field programs established specialty counselors for Pre-ETS and deaf and hard of hearing to reduce caseloads.
- Partnered with DDS to provided E1st services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ARS partnered with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to provide career counseling to all sub-minimum wage 14(c) providers serving over 6,000 clients.
- Collaborated with WIOA partners. For example, the Chief of Field Services sits on the WIOA Executive Board and rehab area managers sit on local WIOA Boards, participate in Partner Meetings, and provide informational presentations on vocational rehabilitation services to local WIOA partners. The WIOA Executive Board hosted two statewide trainings to provide education and referral alignment throughout the state. ARS is working on a unified referral process.
- Collaborated with DHS to provide individuals with developmental disabilities work opportunities through the State Agency Model Employer program.
- Updated the agency's policy to include the WIOA changes, with an effective date of January 1, 2019. Rehab area managers trained staff on the policy updates and reviewed and monitored policies and procedures at monthly staff meetings.

#### ACTI:

- Prior to conversion to ACDC, converted its paper case management system to an electronic system in June 2018. This change improved communication between ACTI counselors and field counselors. In addition, communication protocols are in place that support and enhance the shared roles of case management.
- Prior to conversion to ACDC, participated in community outreach activities throughout the state with the goals of increasing referrals and of raising community awareness of ACTI services. In total, ACTI staff participated in 654 activities through presentations, exhibit booths, conference attendance, and other activities that targeted field staff, the general community, potential employers, high school teachers, and parents.
- Prior to conversion to ACDC, continued to offer talent development programs at ACTI. In PY2017, ACTI served 649 clients through 15 programs. In PY2018, 874 clients were served through 15 programs.

## **Outreach: Strategy**

ARS provides outreach activities to individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and others who are unserved or underserved. For PY 2018, ARS' focus was to provide training to improve outreach activities, and to utilize its network of CRPs to identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.

## **Outreach: Evaluation and Progress**

ARS:

- Developed a multi-pronged program for serving the state's Hispanic community.
- Implemented training for counselors and professional assessment staff to learn the cultural values of the state's Hispanic community and ways to break down cultural and language barriers to accessing VR services.
- Worked with the state's Hispanic transition clients to encourage them to consider VR counseling as a career.
- Developed a statewide strategy with the state's graduate VR programs to recruit more Hispanic/Spanish speaking students who would subsequently be recruited by ARS.
- Established an itinerary point to better serve the Marshallese community, and to disseminate pamphlets and vocational information.
- Located new itinerary points across the state to better serve the underserved and unserved.
- Explored ways to partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide awareness about ARS' services for individuals with disabilities.
- Increased efforts to work with WIOA partners to more effectively provide services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

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

There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model, ACDC.

### **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**

ARS increased the availability of supported employment services to clients by providing training and technical assistance to vendors and vocational rehabilitation counselors. ARS placed a greater

emphasis on proven and innovative supported employment outcomes related to competitive integrated employment performance-based outcomes. ARS created a new monitoring process to track the number of vendors in each area, number of clients served by each vendor, milestone payments made, and expenditures. Successful closure data is shared with CRPs.

### **Supported Employment: Evaluation and Progress**

During PY2018, SE referrals remained at the PY2017 level at 286. The SE successful employment outcomes increased from 116 to 117, which is a one percent increase. However, based on all 26 closures, SE successful employment outcomes continued at five percent.

ARS:

- Ensured the quality of SE services by monitoring data related to expenditures, through ongoing communication with the counselors, and by monitoring CRPs, who received specific funding amounts, through vendor case review.
- Hosted two trainings provided by DOL ODEP Subject Matter Experts that targeted state leadership and focused on supported employment for individuals with significant behavioral health concerns. Additionally, ARS hosted a stakeholders meeting where 40 participants discussed supported employment services/individual placement and supports, and what it means to be an Employment First state.
- Partnered, by utilizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with Division of Workforce Services, Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the Department of Human Services: Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and Division of Adult, Aging, and Behavioral Health Services. The MOU defines the partnership, the roles and responsibilities between the agencies, and successful employment as competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Collaborated with AR APSE to host the organization's biennial conference, which focused on best models of service provision for supported employment, customized employment, and provider transformation.
- Hosted free online job coach certification training with a total of 284 participants certified, and provided training on supported employment to 676 participants.
- ARS provided transition from employment to extended services beginning when individuals reach a point of stabilization on the job and for the next 90 days towards successful closure. After ARS closes the cases as successful, extended services is transitioned to the provider responsible for funding. If the individual is on waiver, originally funding has been through the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services Waiver Program. In PY2018, this funding transferred to the Provider-led Shared Savings Entity (PASSE), a model of organized care created by Act 775 of 2017. Each PASSE is made up of governing providers who have entered into a partnership with an experienced program administration organization. If the individual is not on waiver, providers must generate funding to provide extended services.

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



There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model, ACDC.

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

In PY2018, the measurable skill gains rate as reported on the ETA-9169 was 25.2%. ARS is monitoring performance on other section 116 indicators, and rates for expected levels of performance will be reported in the two-year update.

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

During PY2018, ARS utilized I&E funds to support activities of the State Rehabilitation Council. Monies were also utilized to fund a large portion of the State Independent Living Council's (SILC) budget as outlined in the SILC's resource plan. Funds were used to support outreach activities to unserved and underserved Arkansans with disabilities and to strengthen relationships with our business partners.

### 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

##### **Quality**

ARS refers individuals for Supported Employment services to one of 63 certified CRPs. Supported Employment services are provided to individuals with a most significant disability, including youth with a most significant disability. The services are individualized and customized, consistent with the unique preferences, interests, needs, supports (PINS), and informed choice by the individual. Supported Employment processes assist job seekers with job development, job placement, stabilization on the job, 90 days to successful employment and extended services funded by other entities or by ARS for a youth under 25. Supported Employment is a "place then train" model.

##### **Scope of Services**

ARS determines eligibility for SE services and CRPs bill based on meeting the Milestone requirements.

**Milestone 1 – Referral/Job Development:** CRPs accept the referral and provide assistance with career readiness activities (seeking employment, filling out applications, and interviewing skills, etc.) and assistance in the development, creation, or identification of paid integrated work in a community business or self-employment setting.

**Milestone 2 – Job Placement:** CRPs assist an individual in obtaining a job in a competitive integrated setting based on his/her interests, abilities, needs, and informed choice. The individual is

placed in a competitive integrated employment setting with supports for a period of time, and is compensated commensurate with others in the same position at minimum wage or above.

**Milestone 3 – Stabilization:** This service time frame assures an individual has learned his/her job with supports to meet the demands of the integrated work environment in assurance of long-term job success. The individual works successfully for the minimum required 15 hours a week identified in the IPE. The individual must remain on the job 30 days or more to be considered stable, and the Job Coach reduces support to less than 20 percent of the individual's working hours. Extended services begin in stabilization with the identification of the funding source or by ARS, if a youth is under the age of 25. Youth receiving extended services funded by ARS will remain in this status until the service is no longer needed and the youth is considered successfully employed or until four years of this service expires or the youth reaches the age of 25.

## 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

ARS provides time-limited services needed to support an individual in employment. Vocational Rehabilitation can fund a maximum of 24 months of job coaching and follow-along services unless the IPE indicates more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability before transitioning to extended services. Prior to the purchase of supported employment services, the counselor determines the need for services, the appropriate funding stream for extended services, and the selected CRP through informed choice and identified on the IPE. The transition to the extended services (long-term funding source) occurs after the individual is employed at the goal of 15 hours established in ARS policy and begins to stabilize on the job. After the determination of funding for extended services, the individual must maintain employment for at least 90 days before the individual's case is a successful closure and before he/she is transitioned to extended services. This transition would be completed within a 24-month time frame of supported employment services, including job coaching. If a determination is made based that the individual needs more than 24 months of services to achieve job stability and the time-limited services of job coaching, ARS will obtain justification from the CRP.

ARS developed the Youth Extended Services policy for individuals under the age of 25. This policy allows ARS to pay for youth extended services if no other resources are available up to four years or age 25. Youth Extended Services may be available through Individualized Job Coaching Services on an as needed basis after job placement. Youth Extended Services is available for up to 200 hours per year not to exceed four years during the execution of the IPE. The service supports youth to ensure job longevity and includes onsite visits to both the individual and the employer. The Extended Services requirement for onsite contact is a minimum requirement for monthly onsite contact. Once the individual reaches the age of 25, ARS must assure extended service funding resources are available through another source. Youth receiving extended services funded by ARS will remain in stabilization status until the service is no longer needed and the youth is considered successfully employed or until four years of this service expires or the youth reaches the age of 25.

Once the case is closed successful (status 26), this service is transitioned to the provider responsible for funding, which may include payment through the individual's community employment services waiver plan funded by the Provider-led Shared Savings Entity (PASSE), a model of organized care created by Act 775 of 2017. Each PASSE is made up of governing providers who have entered into a partnership with an experienced program administration organization. If

the individual is not on waiver, providers must generate funding to provide extended services.

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) 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[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], 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;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Division of Workforce Services

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[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], 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;

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;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) 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;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Joseph Baxter

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

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.

FOOTNOTES

[14] Public Law 113-128.

[15] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

[16] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[17] No funds under title I 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.

[18] 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 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations.

[19] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Joseph Baxter
Title of Signatory	Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Date Signed	09/24/2020

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:**

The State Plan must include	Include
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. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.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 or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.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	
3.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)	
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. Select yes or no,	No

The State Plan must include	Include
as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.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? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.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	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.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	
3.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	
3.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:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.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	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.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? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. 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	
4.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	
4.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	
4.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	
4.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	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. 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	
4.j.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:	
5.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	

The State Plan must include	Include
5.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	
5.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:	
6.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	
6.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:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.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	
7.b.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	



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	24.0%	24.0%	24.0%	25.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*