

ARKANSAS PYS 2020-2023

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

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

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)

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:

[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 Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

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

This agency is an independent commission.

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

The Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

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

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

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

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence, this section is not applicable.

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

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

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

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) cooperates with other WIOA partners and can make referrals for adult literacy, higher education, DHS programs, and other services as needed. DSB and ARS have shared cooperative agreements with the 33 Institutions of Higher Education. DSB works in close partnership with schools, especially the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide vocational rehabilitation services and Pre-ETS to students. DSB also coordinates with the Department of Education's Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) to serve high school students who are blind or visually impaired.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the following DHS agencies DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services; DHS Division of Behavioral Health (DBHS); DHS Division of Children and Family Services; DHS Division of County Operations; DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS); and DHS Division of Youth Services. There are also the following interagency and non-profit agreements between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), DDS, DBHS, Arkansas Department of Education Special Education Unit (ADE SEU), and DSB for increasing the number of individuals in competitive employment and expanding Supported Employment. An agreement between ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

DSB shares broadcast engineering services and uses facilities at the Arkansas Educational Television Network to provide DSB's Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) and Newslines. People who are blind or visually impaired can access AIRS broadcasts of news and other informational programming 24 hours a day via computers, smart phones, laptops, and live streaming. The signal is also broadcast on the secondary audio (MTS) of AETN-4, and is carried by many cable TV systems. Newslines enables people who are blind or visually impaired to access over 300 newspapers and magazines via phone, Internet, digital talking-book player and Mp3 players.

DSB works cooperatively with service organizations and non-profits to raise awareness of blindness issues and promote the independence of people who are blind or visually impaired. These organizations include Arkansas Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind Arkansas Chapter, the American Council of the Blind Arkansas Chapter. The Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory at UAMS, Mid-South Sight and Hearing, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB and ARS are working with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and the Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI) on two Deafblind projects. DSB has also signed an MOU with the American Indian Center of Arkansas.

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

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program, which is the State program that carries out section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, and DSB coordinates as needed. DSB has a cooperative agreement with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to have dual caseloads in regard to participants who are deaf—blind. DSB provides blindness services and ARS addresses deafness needs.

The Division of Services for the Blind Director sits on the ICAN Board. ICAN also attends DSB's annual meetings to provide onsite equipment updates and share information with DSB staff.

Additionally, DSB has our assistive technology lab to assist consumers who are blind or visually impaired. The Technology Director works closely with ICAN. DSB has referred consumers to ICAN to borrow equipment while waiting on theirs to be delivered and to assist consumers in repairing their equipment. DSB participates in ICAN's quarterly meeting and their yearly training with NanoPac. When a consumer being served by DSB's technology lab has secondary disabilities, ICAN assists the lab in identifying additional technology resources.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Office of Information and Technology to ensure its Data Loss Protection (DLP) project does not take any action that would affect access to adaptive software and accommodations by DWS employees who are blind or visually impaired.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit has tested accessibility on the AWARE data management system project, Office 365, and 508 Enhancements, a national project that will assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in using Microsoft Share products. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some of the DWS Office 365 cloud programs. Assessments for assistive technology are completed by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has helped VR Counselors install computer equipment and perform other technology related tasks, so that they can provide basic technology support to participants in their respective geographic areas statewide. This initiative has also expanded the capacity of the DSB Business and Technology Unit.

DSB has formed partnerships with businesses that will train counselors on new assistive technology. DSB is among the agencies and organizations tasked with implementing the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act in Arkansas. Its partner World Services for the Blind has been designated to distribute technology equipment under the federal legislation. Through the Act, participants will be exposed to more technology available to assist them in their daily lives, job searches and workplaces.

DSB continues to collaborate with the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (ALBPH) and maintains several digital recorders to be used by staff to teach participants how to access digital talking books, both by standard mail distribution and through the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website. Additionally, available technology services can be offered and augmented by DSB's technology staff and lab.

Each year DSB coordinates with the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Office of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and related consumer groups to proclaim and celebrate the last week of June as Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week and observe her birthdate June 27. A deaf-blind consumer is chosen to accept the proclamation from the Governor at the State Capitol.

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

DSB makes referrals of participants to commodity programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which are under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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

DSB maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including: Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership, Arkansas Workforce Development Board, Interagency Steering Committee on Integrated Employment, Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council, The Arkansas Independent Living Council, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities, Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, Youth Leadership Forum, Accessible Parking Taskforce, Local Workforce Development Boards across the state.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

DSB 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

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.

DSB has agreed with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with a disability beginning at age 16 through the age of 21. Students with a disability who are eligible for VR services will receive their Pre ETS services through their Individualized Plan for Employment.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired and are in public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI). The interagency agreement with the Department of Education outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel.

DSB also has cooperative agreements with Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Arkansas School for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI), and 33 Institutions of Higher Education.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations including, but not limited to, Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of

Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP held a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2018 in Little Rock and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits.

DSB sends representatives to these conferences and will continue to participate in 2020-2023. As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Special Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible under pre-employment transition services, DSB is reaching out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors and one Pre-ETS Area Manager to reach participants throughout the state.

DSB Transition Counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) before students determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leave the school setting.

In regard to the development and approval of IPE's, all DSB participants, including transition students, receive services based upon their IPE. The counselor and the participant and/or a representative, as appropriate, develop the IPE jointly and mutually approve its contents. The IPE must be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome chosen by the individual and be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice. The services, service providers, and all activities selected by the participant must be necessary to meet the employment outcome goal. The VR Counselor communicates with the participant and other service providers, such as ARS, to avoid duplication of services and to ensure consideration of comparable benefits, where applicable.

Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. A consumer who is determined eligible for VR services would receive their Pre-ETS services under the VR Case Type.

Secondary schools invite DSB to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services. The IEP outlines the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services.

In June of each year, DSB conducts Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students age 16 to graduation who are blind or severely visually impaired. Thirty (30) students from across the state are accepted into the program each year. DSB coordinates with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) in the planning and operation of Jump Start. ASBVI holds its summer learning program for youth under age 16 at the same time that DSB has Jump Start for high school students, so the two agencies share cafeteria staff,

infirmity nurses, and security guards, and at least one ASBVI staff member is assigned to assist during Jump Start. DSB houses the students at ASBVI during the week (students go home on weekends). This three-week program exposes Jump Start students to the world of work and assisted them in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment or post-secondary education. Students were placed in part-time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They worked in the mornings and during the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learned independent living and job readiness skills; computer technology; and, if needed, orientation and mobility skills. Jump Start increases the students' confidence, social skills, and self—esteem. It also strengthens DSB's relationship with ASBVI.

DSB has an RSA-approved agreement with the Department of Education/Special Education, which provides information on financial responsibilities, the lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB participates in monthly conference calls with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to ensure transparent fiscal monitoring and oversight of the Pre-ETS funds allocated to the State of Arkansas.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. DSB Pre-ETS counselors continue to make face to face visits to all schools across the state in their areas throughout the school year, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visionally Impaired. DSB Pre-ETS counselors also present and visit schools during transition fairs, open houses, parent nights, school staff meetings, and any other school functions they can attend to discuss available Pre-ETS services. DSB Pre-ETS counselors mail out letters annually to all schools across the state regarding the DSB Pre-ETS Jump Start program. The letters sent to the schools, provide information about DSB for potential referrals. Counselors have also hosted transition fairs for schools.

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;

DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to identify the technology needs, independent living needs, and educational training needs of identified students beginning at age 16 in the school system and through IEP meetings and planning meetings for those meeting the 504 regulations. Monthly meetings are held with our VR and Pre-ETS counselors and the school consultants to determine goals and objectives for students. Quarterly visits to schools are conducted to provide labor market information, university application and scholarship information, and technical school opportunities available within the key labor market sectors of the State. DSB begins providing Pre-ETS services to eligible and potentially eligible students with a disability at age 16.

An updated agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) was developed to address the Section 113 Pre-employment transition activities that are authorized under WIOA and the requirements of Section 511. This MOU was created in conjunction with the Arkansas

Rehabilitation Service Agency. The agreement was signed in January 2018. The interagency agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB has reached out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors that provide information to eligible and potentially eligible students with visual impairments both in large print and electronically through the school system.

Pre-ETS services include five core areas: Job exploration counseling: these are services to assist the student in exploring the world or work and learning more about their interests, abilities and future career goals. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, that are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring. DSB works to ensure our Pre-ETS transition counselors have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Work Force Development Boards. Summer work experiences, work place readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

For youth with a disability age 14 through 21 who are VR eligible, DSB Pre ETS counselors provide VR services. If a VR eligible youth with a disability also meets the definition of a student with a disability (beginning at age 16), DSB Pre ETS counselors will provide Pre ETS services to that consumer alongside their other VR services on their IPE. For students with a disability aged 16 through 21, who have not applied and been determined eligible for VR services and are therefore potentially eligible, they will receive Pre-ETS services as described above as soon as possible, but the time shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. DSB, in collaboration the local education agency, will provide services to assist the student in developing and successfully achieving their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) goal. On a statewide basis, DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS high school transition staff and one Pre-ETS Manager to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB will continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referrals to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded an opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or re-enter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identify consumers who could benefit from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, achieving at least the

minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A Memorandum of Agreement was developed and signed in 2017 through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The proposal includes provisions for use of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment.

DSB's Director joined the other Vision Quest Directors in the official signing of the Super MOU in winter of 2018. DSB currently does not serve any individuals in a sub-minimum wage or 511 situation.

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

DSB counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) at age 14. The IPE is developed no later than 90 days after eligibility is determined. DSB works to develop IPEs at age 14 and every year until the student transitions out of high school. Secondary schools invite DSB's counselors to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, (such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services). DSB conducts independent living, technology and vocational assessments after the determination of eligibility in order to address planning needs. This information is shared with the education staff in determining career goals and objectives. DSB will provide accommodations according to the IPE that are not the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to FAPE regulations. Peer support and mentoring is arranged for the duration of transition services. The IEP and the IPE outline the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services. DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services. New federal mandates require that DSB, in collaboration with local educational agencies, offer to transition age high school students with disabilities (ages 16-22) Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) using 15% of our federal allocation on an annual basis.

Pre-ETS services include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. And, instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring.

In order to reach our goals, DSB is ensuring our seven Pre-ETS transition counselors and Pre-ETS Area Manager have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Workforce Development Boards. Summer work experiences, work place readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have

been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged throughout the school year and in the summer. Planning and implementation begin as soon as possible, and shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. On a statewide basis, DSB has designated high school transition staff to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB continues to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referral to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Transition in regards to Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded a full opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or reenter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identifying consumers who could benefit from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, earning at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A new Memorandum of Agreement was developed through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The Agreement includes provisions for use of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment. DSB's Director joined the other agencies Directors at the official signing of the MOU in the winter of 2018. DSB does not have any consumers employed in a 511 or less than minimum wage situation.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

VR services delivered under WIOA do not remove, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows: 1. Local education agencies provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with visual impairment and those with low or no vision, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities. 2. DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ESVI and Teachers for the Visually Impaired assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training,

education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome. The Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education share the financial responsibility of ensuring that the provision of pre-employment transition services are planned and implemented within the school system. 3. The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services in collaboration with the Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education work to reduce the number of sheltered workshop placements by promoting competitive employment in an integrated setting to all low vision and blind participants. In order to promote independence and self-sufficiency, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment. Financial Responsibilities DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ARS, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

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

For outreach and identification of students who are blind or severely visually impaired, DSB continues to coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors and Regional Certified Vision Consultants of Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). A collaborative data base of lists of transition students is maintained.

DSB Counselors will continue to make face to face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories and will contact them at least twice a year by sending information by mail and emails. Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. DSB make presentations at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on pre-employment transition services and how to access these services. DSB will continue outreach efforts to private, home, and accredited virtual schools. DSB's Pre-ETS team hosts a parent summit annually in August before school starts to inform students and parents of available resources. DSB brings in speakers to discuss assistive technology, college, workplace readiness, etc. DSB Pre-ETS team also hosts and attend transition fairs and parent summits around the state for students and parents to gather available resources from vendors participating in the events such as colleges, disability rights, community rehabilitation facilities. ARS, Arkansas Transition Services, etc. DSB has hosted transition fairs/parent summits in El Dorado, Dumas, Little Rock, Pine Bluff and Magnolia. DSB has attended transition fairs in Dumas, Dewitt, Lake Village, Greenwood, North Little Rock, Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Dermott, Cedar Ridge, Monticello and Crawford and Washington counties. DSB Pre-ETS staff will continue to host and attend these events around the state.

DSB will continue its system of mailouts and emails twice a year to area ESVI Consultants. In addition to the local outreach efforts, the Pre-ETS Area Manager will reach out to ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and solicit referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

As a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), DSB is able to coordinate transition services and discuss related issues with AITP representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS),

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP holds a Summer Agency Connections conference annually, and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits. DSB sends representatives to these conferences.

As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible. DSB reaches out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under Pre-ETS. DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS counselors and one Area Manager that do outreach to participants throughout the state.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list semi-annually. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. Outreach for the Pre-ETS and WIOA required activities that include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible. Counseling and guidance on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The procedures for outreach and identifying students who would benefit from these services are as follows: 1. All transition counselors engage with the LEA staff on a monthly basis to provide literature in large print and digitally by electronic means to be then provided to special education teachers throughout the state on the referral process, the core services provided under Pre-ETS, and how to access DSB services to engage in exploration of competitive integrated employment settings. 2. All DSB transition counselor staff make face-to-face visits with the nursing staff, school counselor staff, and special and regular education staff within each high school on at least a monthly basis to offer this information and to provide further clarification and to answer questions on the process, what the core services are under Pre-ETS and how to access those services. Referrals are taken both digitally and by paper referral process. 3. All DSB transition counselor staff along with the Statewide Field Administrator attend monthly meetings with ESVI and Teacher for the Blind meetings to discuss upcoming events and to identify students currently in sub-minimum wage situations that need information and counseling on how to access DSB services to work towards competitive integrated employment.

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) reported that there are approximately 40 students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind between the ages of 16 through 21 to include 2 Deafblind students. DSB has identified 70 post-secondary students on the caseloads and 78 secondary students to include 2 secondary Deafblind students which is a total of the 148 students that DSB Pre-ETS counselors are currently serving. There are 92 VR eligible students and 56 potentially eligible students. Currently being served by DSB.

For the FFY 2019 grant DSB set aside \$989,572.65. Of this DSB has committed \$342, 657.03 to paying for staff time and associated expenses as allowed. DSB expects to spend \$620,000 on providing the 5 required Pre-ETS activities. This will allow DSB to spend \$26,915.62 on authorized services.

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.

DSB develops agreements in response to: (1) state and federal laws and regulations, (2) results of needs assessments, (3) suggestions from consumer groups, and (4) recommendations of staff and stakeholders including those in the Workforce Services arena. DSB uses the RSA guideline template to develop cooperative agreements.

DSB has been a long-standing partner with the Arkansas Deaf blindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB. DSB has worked with the Helen Keller National Center to improve services for those consumers who are deaf-blind and to provide training for DSB staff. DSB operates the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS), which began as a private non-profit organization and is now part of the state agency. The organization's founders formed Friends of AIRS (FAIRS) to continue its support of the station. DSB leases facilities for AIRS from the PBS, which provides DSB with in-kind services in the form of engineering services and other technology.

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.

DSB maintains contractual agreements with private non-profit and for-profit agencies in the state to provide supported employment and extended services as applicable to our consumers with most significant disabilities, including youth with most significant disabilities. These services have been provided by World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Ed Davis Inc. Team Academy, Building Bridges, S.W. Chance, and Arkansas Support Network. A new vendor application is being utilized to improve client and vendor service delivery.

DSB continued to utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Education-Special Education Unit, Transition Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Adult Services and Behavior Health Services. This MOU defines each agency's roles and responsibilities toward competitive integrated employment for individuals with most significant disabilities. This partnership also supports on-going Employment First activities for the state.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes

customized employment. Each of the SE services providers provides extended services for 24 months or as long as the individual is employed.

Half of the funds that Arkansas receives under the supported employment state grant is used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years.

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

DSB has designated a minimum of 26% of the workday of each counselor to be devoted to developing competitive integrated employment, internships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and volunteer job site opportunities for all participants. DSB counselors serve as business consultants, because they are most familiar with the skills, training, and capabilities of their clients. This activity is done with the interest of the participant in mind. Counselors seek out employers who have career matches that meet the interest and abilities of the participant or it is done with the aspirations and future goals of the participant in mind. This way more territory is covered and the counselors can match potential careers to the individuals they directly support. DSB currently has 26 VR counselors performing this function. Counselors conduct outreach to businesses and provide information and demonstrations on accommodations and technology to employers. DSB tracks all business contacts and is working on a common system in conjunction with all the workforce partners to have a shared platform of business leads. DSB counselors play a significant role in sharing the business needs with other partners and, in turn, have access to other business leads developed by workforce partners.

DSB is in the process recruiting for a Business Engagement Coordinator position. The anticipated date for the position to be filled is April 2020. The addition of the Business Engagement Coordinator will strengthen existing and new partnerships with businesses and corporations to allow DSB clients more job opportunities in competitive wage industries.

DSB and other WIOA partners work together on the WIOA Business Engagement Committee to share information and provide information to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, DSB has reached out to larger businesses to develop job site training placements and direct hire opportunities for DSB participants. DSB is currently working with Children's Hospital and Verizon Wireless on expedited interviews for candidates that meet the education and skill needs of these companies for current vacancies. Candidates are given an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and once selected on-the-job training is arranged. DSB has also arranged for internship opportunities within state government and will continue to expand this project.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB currently has 22 VR counselor positions working to provide services. DSB's Business Engagement Coordinator started in November of 2020. DSB also has an Outreach Manager in place to coordinate the outreach activities in this section.

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

In regards to pre-employment transition services, tours and informational interviews of large employers like Fed—Ex, Heifer International, Wal-Mart Distribution Centers and JB Hunt have been arranged to expose students and youth to real world opportunities within the State.

Through local business and industry, pre-employment transition students and youth are exposed to work experiences within a call center environment, a manufacturing environment, and computer applications.

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;

DSB will continue its close working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with a goal of competitive integrated employment. DSB partners with ARS with dual caseloads that has a similar agreement for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

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

DSB will continue active working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with the goal of competitive integrated employment with the DDS and DBHS. DSB partners with ARS with dual caseloads that has a similar agreement for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences DSB and the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities serve on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues. DSB also partners with DDS on Employment First Initiatives and APSE.

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

DSB will continue active relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services of each agency to initiate Employment First Activities. Each agency agrees to serve individuals with disabilities with the goal of competitive integrated employment. . DSB along with ARS, DDS, and BHS have worked with DOL ODEP consultants to improve supported employment services for individuals with mental health issues. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

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;

DSB is currently serving 856 consumers and employs a total of 57 staff:

Field Services – (Total 37)

Field Administration – 3

Managers – 5

Counselors – 18

Administrative Support – 11

Central Office – (Total 20)

Director's Office – 1

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology – 7

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is currently serving 730 VR consumers and employs a total of 59 staff.

Field Services – (Total 39)

Field Administration – 5

Managers – 4

Counselors – 18

Administrative Support – 12

Central Office – (Total 20)

Director's Office – 1

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology – 7

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

Field Services – (Total 56)

Field Administration – 4

Managers – 5

Counselors – 28

Administrative Support – 19

Central Office – (Total 22)

Director’s Office – 2

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology - 8

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.

Field Services – (Total 56)

Field Administration – 4

Managers – 5

Counselors – 28

Administrative Support – 19

Central Office – (Total 22)

Director’s Office – 2

Finance – 4

Administrative Support – 8

Business and Technology - 8

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

The Staff Development Coordinator maintains contact with the institutions of higher education and gathers data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2018-2019 has 26 students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 3 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018-2019 has 80 students enrolled. Of these students there are 78 full—time students, 2 part—time students, and 32 graduates.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling. The department emphasizes the integration of multiculturalism and diversity into counseling psychology and is committed to multiculturalism broadly-defined in teaching, research, practice, and service. The Spring 2018-2019 has 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students, and 19 graduates.

Update PY2022-2023

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2020-2021 has students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 31 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2022 semester has fifty-three students enrolled. One student graduated during the 2020-2021 academic year. One student is registered to complete phase two practicum in O and M.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling. The department emphasizes the integration of multiculturalism and diversity into counseling psychology and is committed to multiculturalism broadly defined in teaching, research, practice, and service. The Spring 2018-2019 has 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students, and 19 graduates.

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and The University of Wisconsin-Stout through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

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

University of Arkansas at Fayetteville – 23 Full Time, 3 Part Time

University of Arkansas at Little Rock – 78 Full Time, 2 Part Time

University of Wisconsin-Stout – 27 Full Time, 11 Part Time

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.

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2018-2019 has 26 students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 3 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018-2019 has 80 students enrolled. Of these students there are 78 full—time students, 2 part—time students, and 32 graduates.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling.

The department emphasizes the integration of multiculturalism and diversity into counseling psychology and is committed to multiculturalism broadly-defined in teaching, research, practice, and service. The Spring 2018-2019 has 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students, and 19 graduates.

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and The University of Wisconsin-Stout through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

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.

DSB has cooperative agreements with each of the 33 colleges/universities in Arkansas in order to promote the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education.

To address current needs for qualified personnel, DSB posts vacancies on the state employment website arstatejobs.com, the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and university recruitment bulletins. It also sends job notices to the Arkansas American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind for distribution. Recruitment efforts are ongoing to the 15 fully accredited graduate programs within TACE Region VI, including Arkansas colleges and universities in the region and those with a historically predominate minority enrollment.

Universities in Arkansas with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs include:

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) Location: Fayetteville Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education.

Institution: University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Institution: The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in

Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree.

Bachelor's degree or Non—MRC Master's degree — L051C Rehabilitation Counselor/GS06 — \$36,154.98 (annual) — \$17.3822 (hourly)

Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)/CRC — L098C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/GS08 — \$45,009.95 (annual) — \$21.6394 (hourly)

The Staff Development section reviews the current training levels of all personnel and develops and monitors agency policy and procedure for training and retaining qualified personnel meet standards required by the Department of Education and other federal/state requirements. All DSB employees receive an annual personnel performance evaluation from their immediate supervisor, which is reviewed and approved by DSB Director. The evaluation considers the training each employee needs to fulfill job duties in providing services to our consumers.

DSB will continue to work closely with the universities to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students and notify universities when job openings become available. Students are recruited from university and college rehabilitation programs within the state to seek employment with DSB upon graduation. DSB maintains communication with the university programs including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A), the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), The University of Wisconsin-Stout. In addition, DSB will plan to meet quarterly with the universities to provide updates within the vocational rehabilitation field to give practitioner input, and to receive first—hand information regarding graduates from the MRC programs.

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

DSB revised VR Counselor job descriptions to update roles and responsibilities due to increasing duties, and also to assist with increasing salaries for DSB VR Counselors competitive to surrounding regions. Additionally, leadership is reviewing training and development opportunities to help with retention of counselors.

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 Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.

Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the state. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

Update PY2022-2023 As of the December 2021 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Not certified; 7 VR Counselors with CRC. 2 VR Counselors anticipating taking CRC exam October 2022. 1 VR Counselor with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollments in a CRC Master's level program. 3 Supervisors with CRC.

As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Non certified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 1 VR Counselor anticipating taking CRC exam Spring 2020. 1 VR Counselor with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollment in a CRC Master's level program. 5 Supervisors with CRC.

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 Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in

Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State. DSB did not have any interns in FY 2019.

As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Non certified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 1 VR Counselor anticipating taking CRC exam Spring 2020. 1 VR Counselors with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollment in a CRC Master's level program and 5 Area Managers with CRC.

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

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

The Division of Services for the Blind works with ICAN to provide training on rehabilitation technology to staff. ICAN attends DSB's annual meeting each year. While at this meeting ICAN offers demonstrations and a chance for counselors to view new technology and talk with them about the technology. ICAN also offers trainings on this technology to staff. DSB participates in the ICAN trainings from NanoPac that occur each year on technology and software available for consumers who are blind.

Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods:

- U of A CURRENTS periodically surveys rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and develops courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies. In the last fiscal year, CURRENTS offered face-to-face trainings and teleconferences on topics including: Writing and Marketing Your Business Plan; All Paths Lead to Adult Life: Important Partnerships and Components of Quality Transition Planning for Students with

Intellectual Disabilities Sessions 1 and 2; Making Ethical Decisions in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process; Psychological Evaluations: Not Just for Eligibility; Using the DSM—5 Assessment Tools and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) As Training Tools for Rehabilitation Counselors; Therapeutic Interventions with Aggressive Clients; Evaluating Vocational Communication Skills of Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Multiculturalism and Disabilities; Using the Updated CRC Code of Ethics to Make Ethical Decisions in Everyday Tasks; Putting Together Your Business’s Winning Team; Transition to Success for Individuals with Autism; Using Social Media to Plan Careers and Find Employment; Working with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS); Resources: You Got ‘Em, Now Use ‘Em; Job Success with Young Adults Diagnosed with DSM 5 Neurodevelopmental Disorders; The

Use of Interest Inventories and Other Techniques with People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Changing Nature of Disability in the 21st Century; The Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Multiple Sclerosis Parts 1 and 2; Rehabilitation of Persons with Bipolar Disorders; Rehabilitation of Persons with Depressive Disorders; Flipping the Script: Viewing Our Work Through a Social Model Lens; Working With Justice—Involved VR Clients; Using Qualitative Tools in Career Counseling; and Backs in a Flash.

- In-house training is provided through DSB’s Quality Assurance Coordinator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; DSB’s annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director’s meetings, Supervisors’ meetings, emails and the agency website. Training is also purchased from outside sources, such as the Older Individuals Who Are Blind Training provided by Mississippi State University.

- Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations’ state and national conferences.

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

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

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee’s performance and to identify individual training needs.

- In-house training is provided through DSB's Quality Assurance Coordinator Database Administrator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails, the agency website. Training is also purchased from outside sources.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.

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

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

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

DSB has been a long—standing partner with the Arkansas Deafblindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB.

DSB has accepted an invitation from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to become a member of its National Community of Practice, formerly known as state affiliates. The group is currently composed of 38 organizations and agencies, with more being added as responses are received from invitations that were sent out by HKNC.

DSB provides interpreter services for communication with persons with limited English-speaking ability on a contractual basis. In addition, one of the Area Field Supervisors speaks Spanish and French and understands Portuguese from having lived in Brazil (Central Arkansas has a community of Brazilians). Another Area Field Supervisor speaks Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Swedish languages. A member of the Business and Technology staff is fluent in Spanish. DHS has an in—house, certified Spanish interpreter in Miller County. These communication resources can be utilized as needed to serve participants.

Reader service, guide service, and any special adaptive equipment are made available to applicants for services, DSB participants, and DSB personnel. Information is also available in the medium of choice for persons making application for DSB services and for persons with disabilities who are employed by DSB.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website.

Through the AITP, local issues are addressed by local teams. The local teams provide oversight to ensure that transition goals and services are in place by the time a child becomes eligible, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

DSB works with Arkansas Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education to plan and develop pre-employment transition services and to coordinate services for individuals being served dually and under the PROMISE grant. The Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education staff provide training and information on transition services to vocational rehabilitation and workforce services staff. In turn, vocational rehabilitation staff, both DSB and ARS train and collaborate with Education and Workforce to provide training on how to establish work based learning experiences, providing job exploration counseling and counseling on opportunities in enrollment in post-secondary counseling, as well as cross training on instructional models in supported employment. Our agencies work together towards utilizing best practices on Section 101, IDEA, ADA and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). DSB's transition coordinator participates in monthly meetings with ESVI staff and teachers for the visually impaired.

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;

In December 2019, DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services, and assess possible needs. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and employers. In cases for which email addresses were available, an email with a brief description of the needs assessment, instructions for completing the online survey, and a direct link to the survey were provided to recipients. In total 451 surveys were emailed: 377 consumer surveys, 52 staff surveys, and 22 partner surveys. In cases for which email addresses were not available, surveys were sent by traditional postal mail. In total, 1,676 surveys were mailed. 1,313 employer surveys and 363 consumer surveys. Surveys were completed in January 2020.

To ensure that outlined needs are being addressed, DSB plans to focus more extensively on conducting assessments via various research methodologies, implementing strategic action plans, and facilitating systematic progress reviews to measure effectiveness.

Based on the needs assessment results, it is recommended that DSB partners more consistently with employers, the Workforce Development System, and various other community rehabilitation programs in an effort to provide more job services and training opportunities to those who are most significantly disabled and those who are underserved.

Because the needs assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, it is recommended that DSB create more outreach initiatives to engage with these populations.

Additional considerations may be given to identifying, coordinating and providing transition career services and pre-employment transition services to youth and students with disabilities.

Needs Assessment results suggest that those with the most significant disabilities are most in need a job services, with 33% of respondents stating “job development and placement” as an essential service, 27% stating “employment preparation” as an essential service, 23% stating that “on-the-job training” as an essential service, and 17% stating “soft skills development” as an essential service.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Needs Assessment results suggest that 38% of consumers served are of a racial/ethnic minority group, with 29% reporting as Black or African-American, 7% reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 1% reporting as a Mix of two or more races, and 1% reporting as Asian. Overall, transportation, job services, and training present the greatest barriers to employment for this group.

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

Needs Assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, with 53%, 43% and 43% respectively reporting these categories. In particular, job placement and transportation were listed most frequently as barriers to employment for this population. Specifically, one consumer, who identified as residing in a rural area stated that, “living outside of the city limits” and not having adequate transportation impeded upon employment opportunities while another consumer, who expressed a need for extended services, stated that there is a “lack of employer confidence” when hiring those with disabilities. As such, outreach initiatives to engage those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are imperative. In detail, such initiatives should center on providing information about the job services and transportation services provided through the VR program.

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

Needs Assessment results suggest that at least 50% of respondents have worked with individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Similar to results collected for the minority population as well as results for those who are unserved or underserved by the VR program, assessment results suggest that job services are the most essential needs for those who are served through the workforce development system. Specifically, more than 71% of the respondents noted job placement, work-place readiness skills, and on-the-job training as recurring barriers to employment for those who have been served through the workforce development system in some capacity.

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

Needs Assessment results suggest 24% of consumers who responded are students or youth with disabilities who may be able to benefit from pre-employment transition services or other

transition services. Of this population, the majority cites training, transportation, and job services as the most significant barriers to employment. Because approximately 50% of those who were identified as youth with disabilities referenced a need for training and job services, specifically, a strong consideration of expanding pre-employment transitions services such as work-place readiness skills, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary enrollment opportunities, and career exploration will be imperative moving forward.

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

Needs Assessment results suggest that community rehabilitation programs within the State need to establish, develop and improve in efforts to provide job services and independent living skills, with 57% and 29% respectively reporting these categories. Consistently, among multiple populations of consumers, partners, businesses, and staff, it is noted that consumers who are served by the VR program need effective job services such as workplace readiness skills, job placement, and on-the-job training. Additionally, it is stated that independent living skills may present a barrier in consumers obtaining effective job services. However, the surveys of partners and staff suggest that the limited availability of service providers may hinder effective rehabilitation for VR consumers.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Needs Assessment results suggest that additional research is needed in this area. Although the need assessment results suggest that those who are classified as youth with disabilities, including student with disabilities, cite training, job services and transportation among their greatest barriers to employment, the assessment did not measure how such transition and pre-employment transition services are coordinated with external agencies as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Currently, the agency is still receiving guidance, through training and technical assistance, on what's allowable for pre-employment transition services as outlined under WIOA. For this reason, additional guidance and research is needed to properly assess the extent and effectiveness of coordinated efforts.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

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

Basis for Estimates—DSB used the disability compendium report, population growth, the incidence of blindness, and historical data as the basis to project the number of individuals to be served through Part B of Title I and the number of supported employment cases to be served through Part B of Title VI.

Estimates for Part B of Title I:

In the Department of Human Services Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2019, DSB reported 856 participants had been served by the vocational rehabilitation program. Of the 856 participants 390 participants were minorities. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of \$4,516,818 (\$4,516 per participant) beginning in FFY 2021. Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities.

In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

Estimates for Part B of Title VI:

As an agency DSB is working to emphasize and prioritize supported employment with participants. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

Estimates of Eligible Participants:

Based on statistical reporting derived from the American Community Survey, an overall rate of 2.9% for visual disability for the Arkansas population aged 16 to 64 showed approximately 18,000 persons in Arkansas might be eligible for and could receive vocational rehabilitation services from DSB.

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

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

DSB conducted annual estimates for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. Needs Assessment results suggest 38% of consumers served are of a racial/ethnic minority group, with 29% reporting as Black or African-American, 7% reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 1% reporting as a Mix of two or more races, and 1% reporting as Asian. Based on the internal reports that DSB prepares, DSB served 856 participants during the State Fiscal Year of which 390 were minorities or 45%. Therefore, DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants of which it is projected that 400 or 40% will be minorities. Note: In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

DSB conducted annual estimates for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. Needs Assessment results show that participants most needed job development and placement. These services are part of the Supported Employment contracts that DSB maintains with vendors and can be used to provide the essential services to DSB consumers as indicated in the needs assessment. DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

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

NA

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

NA

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.

DSB is not currently under an order of selection. DSB conducted an annual assessment for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of \$4,516,818 (\$4,516 per participant). This comes from the estimated clients served using DSB's internal reports and the total grant award that DSB receives. Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities. DSB estimates it will serve 15 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of \$120,000 (\$8,000 per participant).

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

The DSB Board, an independent commission, approved the goals and priorities.

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

DSB developed the following goals, strategies, and performance measures for PY 2020 and 2021, based on WIOA, RSA guidance, recommendations by the DSB Board, and the most recent comprehensive, statewide needs assessment. Below are the goals, as approved by the DSB Board: Goal 1: Increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. This goal addresses the identified needs in our CSNA to include job services, job development and placement, on-the-job training, and soft skills development. Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students; and increase transition services to out-of-school youth. This goal addresses the need for Pre-ETS to include training and job services. Goal 3: Expand outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as those who are unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. Goal 4: Increase coordination with employers. Goal 3 and 4 address the need for job placement and training.

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors will schedule and attend face-to-face job exploration meetings to interview human resource professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do those jobs.

Performance Measure:

- A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will make 2 contacts per month for each client in job-readiness status.
- DSB will conduct training for staff on conducting outreach.
- Quality Assurance will develop a new method of tracking employer contacts in AWARE and Salesforce.

Update: PY2022-2023 Staff no longer have AWARE employer access and employer contacts are entered by Business Engagement allowing for consistent and accurate tracking. Counselor made 43 employer contacts for Program Year 2020, and 35 employer contacts in the first 2 Quarters of Program Year 2021. While contacts have been made more challenging due to the pandemic, DSB continues to work to increase contacts with employers and to provide staff training and support to improve outreach.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment.

Performance Measures:

- VR Counselors will require three job contacts per week
- Assist job ready participants with registration at Workforce Services
- Assist job ready participants with registering and applying for careers available through the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP)
- Assist participants with registering and applying for jobs through employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state and non-profit employers.

PY 2020-2021:

- All employer contacts will be entered in the employer module in AWARE.
- DSB will implement a more effective use of the employer module.
- DSB will utilize the Salesforce program for tracking employer contacts.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Performance Measures:

- Through the DSB Small Business program, participants will be provided access to Small Business Association trainings and the Arkansas Secretary of State's trainings on small business enterprises.
- The counselors will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses.
- Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Field Services Administrator, the Small Business Coordinator, and the participant's VR Counselor to ensure that the proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided.
- A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will coordinate a Small Business team to review proposals.
- Provide training for VR counselors on what is needed to complete a small business proposal.
- Revise the policy and procedures for funding small businesses.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB has developed a Small Business Committee and is working to update our policy on Small Business. In addition, DSB is designing a Small Business Brochure to share with consumers.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will refer participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including, but not limited to soft skills and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive integrated employment.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will work with provider agencies to develop more trainings for high in demand jobs for the blind and visually impaired participants.
- DSB will refer participants to Apprenticeship programs across the state.
- DSB will ensure that appropriate guidelines are in place to monitor the providers and trainings.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB continues to work with provider agencies to assist consumers. DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to provide training and support to staff on providing apprenticeships to consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will provide benefits counseling for 100% of clients, adults, students and youth on SSI and SSDI and conduct a one-on-one benefits analysis.
- Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are providing all SSI and SSDI VR participants with benefits counseling.
- Counselors will make participants aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

PY 2020-2021:

- All new counselors will receive benefits counseling training.
- Current counselors will receive benefits counseling updates.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will refer 100% of older blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR services.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will refer 100% of OIB that are interested in employment to VR services.
- VR counselors will make contact with agencies that serve older individuals such as Green Thumb, AAA to seek referrals, and to educate these agencies about DSB services.

Update: PY2022-2023 100% of clients who express interest in work will be referred to VR. DSB will work to develop a tracking mechanism for those clients who start as OIB but decide they wish to work. Clients who express interest in work at the beginning are immediately referred to VR. DSB staff work with local agencies to provide needed services to consumers. DSB also invites agencies to participate in the Older Blind Advisory Committee. Staff have connected with local assisted living centers and town hall meetings to educate communities on our services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers.

Performance Measure:

- Each year, each counselor will select one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year (COY) and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year.
- DSB will award area COY's and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will recognize a COY in each area and nominate them for the state COY.
- DSB will honor the state COY and employer at their annual meeting in December.

Update: PY2022-2023 All Pre-ETS caseloads submitted nominations for Student of the Year, and one overall winner was chosen. DSB had 20 VR caseloads submit a COY nomination, and DSB honored all COYs at the virtual December meeting in PY20 and PY21.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will provide trainings on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.

PY 2020-2021:

- The Assistive Technology staff will develop trainings that can be modified for small and large employers.
- DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness.
- DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants.
- DSB staff will continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB recorded 41 Outreach contacts by counselors during Program Year 2020. DSB staff are now located in Workforce Centers and will work with outreach coordinator to ensure community awareness of programs available.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Performance Measures:

- Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

PY 2020-2021:

- Novice counselors will attend Immersion training during their first six months.
- Counselors will attend specialized training with Louisiana Center for the Blind, Mississippi State University and other training opportunities.
- DSB will utilize UofA Currents for professional trainings.
- DSB will utilize on-line training opportunities.

Update: PY2022-2023 Due to Covid 19 and travel restrictions no in person training has taken place. DSB Staff were provided the opportunity to participate in numerous virtual trainings through NRTC, Mississippi State University, University of Arkansas Currents, Helen Keller National Center, CSAVR, NFB, ACB, and the Technical Assistance Centers. DSB had staff participate in AER Pre-ETS trainings, Lead VR, and the Virginia Commonwealth University Supported Employment course.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants.

Performance Measures:

- Peer mentoring will be used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Area Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.

PY 2020-2021:

- Peer Mentoring program will be implemented with our Pre-ETS program.
- COY's will provide mentoring.
- Participants will be connected to DSB Vendor Operators
- Peer mentoring will be provided during DSB's Jump Start Pre-ETS program.
- Information will be provided on NFB and ACB organizations and utilize their members as mentors.

Update: PY2022-2023 Due to Covid 19 and restrictions we have not been able to implement these strategies. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and Field Administrator attended the NFB and ACB conferences.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA.

Performance Measure:

- DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will continue to be active members on the local Workforce Investment Boards
- DSB executive staff will be active members of the State Workforce Investment Board and participate on committees.
- DSB executive staff will participate with the WIOA Executive Roundtable with all partners and serve on sub-committees to coordinate services
- DSB staff will attend bi-annual partner trainings.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB Staff serve on all WIOA Executive Roundtable Subcommittees. DSB Counselors and Supervisors sit on the WIOA local boards. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and some administrative staff attend the WIOA Partner's meetings each year. Both meetings were virtual in PY2020 and PY2021.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.
- DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

PY 2020-2021:

- Counselors will connect participants to campus tours
- Counselors will assist students with FAFSA and college applications
- Counselors will assist students with campus acclimation and introduce them to campus disability services.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB staff are available to assist consumers with necessary applications. Counselors arrange for O&M as well as introductions for consumers going to college.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities.
- DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for Pre-ETS students.
- DSB will arrange for informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities.
- DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for Pre-ETS students to explore career fields.
- DSB will accompany Pre-ETS students to career seminars and career fairs.
- DSB will arrange for and accompany Pre-ETS students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will work with more vendors and businesses around the state to develop work experience, job shadowing, informational interviews, and career exploration opportunities.

- Pre-ETS counselors will explore career options with students and set up work experience and volunteer opportunities for students to gain “real experiences”.
- DSB will provide a three-weeks “Jump Start” program in which students will hear from company representatives, explore careers and gain work experience.
- Pre-ETS students will participate in job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews.
- DSB will conduct transition fairs and accompany students to other transition/career fairs.

Update: PY2022-2023 Students were still able to participate in virtual work-based learning experiences. Pre-ETS students were able to attend a virtual informational session with blind and visually impaired individuals who discussed their experience in the workforce and with creating their own businesses hosted by Ace Academy. In the first quarter of PY2021, DSB provided 32 Work-Based Learning Experiences to VR eligible Students with a Disability, and 21 Work-Based Learning Experiences to potentially eligible Students with a Disability.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will conduct local transition summits with school districts across the state.
- DSB will participate with trainings of our core partners Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Arkansas Career Education (ACE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE).
- DSB will coordinate a training with our Arkansas School for the Blind and Vision Impaired (ASBVI) project.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB participated in AER trainings and conferences. Staff also participated in trainings with Helen Keller National Center and CAYSI.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measures:

- Counselors and/or Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students.
- The Pre-ETS Manager will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input the local information.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors will contact LEA Area Supervisors and have face to face meetings with school staff.
- Referrals identified by LEA's are sent to Pre-ETS counselors and Pre-ETS Manager for review.
- The LEA spreadsheet will be updated monthly.
- Monthly reports of school contacts will be provided to the Pre-ETS Manager.

Update: PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors have continued to connect with LEA staff and meet face to face when allowed by schools during the pandemic. Pre-ETS staff submit monthly contact reports to their supervisor on all school contacts for that month.

Strategy: Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure:

- Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS Counselors will develop and update IPE's of transition students before they graduate.
- Pre-ETS Manager will review monitor the cases to ensure the IPE's are completed.
- Pre-ETS Counselors will facilitate a meeting with high school staff and college disability services for those attending college.

Update PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors maintain updated IPEs for VR eligible students with updates completed at least every 12 months. All potentially eligible students receive information on applying for VR services prior to graduating so that they may make the appropriate decision for their needs.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure:

- Annually, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will conduct an annual Back to School Summit in August, 2020.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB did conduct a virtual Back to School Summit in August 2020.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant.

Performance Measures:

- Formal assessments for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering.
- Counselors will arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills for them to participate in career exploration services.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors arrange trainings in independent living skills and assistive technology for students and youth.
- DSB will consult with additional vendors to provide independent living and technology training.
- Pre-ETS counselors will refer students for appropriate trainings.
- DSB Tech Lab will provide assistive technology trainings.
- DSB's will provide assistive technology through its Assistive Technology Loaner program.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB hosted an in person, one week, day Jump Start program that focused on independent living skills and technology for Pre-ETS Students. DSB also hosted a two-week virtual Jump Start through Ace Academy for students. DSB continues to work find new vendors. DSB added Ace Academy, Challenge Solutions, Superior Success, and Helen Keller National Center in the last year.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will present at school assemblies, parent teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services.
- DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and schedule demonstration labs on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost—effective resources available to them.
- DSB will continue its system of mail outs and e-mails to public schools.
- DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS counselors will have face to face meetings with the schools

- Pre-ETS counselors will visit and present information at open houses, parents' night, and staff meetings.
- DSB will annually mail out letters to schools with information about our Pre-ETS program.

Update PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors have continued to connect with LEA staff and meet face to face when allowed by schools during the pandemic.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).

Performance Measures:

- DSB will continue its system of mail outs and e-mails twice a year to area ESVI representatives.
- In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.
- DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

PY 2020-2021:

- Pre-ETS staff will meet with the ESVI team as a group to strengthen our working relationship.
- Pre-ETS counselors and ESVI consultants will refer students to each other's agency for appropriate services.
- Pre-ETS Manager will provide updated list of students to the counselors.
- Pre-ETS staff will attend the annual AER conference.

Update PY2022-2023 All Pre-ETS counselors and additional DSB staff attended AER conference. While staff were not able to meet as a group, Pre-ETS counselors maintained contact with their local ESVI consultants, allowing them to continue to receive referrals to the Pre-ETS program.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will formulate an alliance with non-profit organizations established in the Delta region, to provide information and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will coordinate meetings with non-profits and agencies that are established in the Delta region, to provide information and trainings to individuals living in the Delta region of the state.

Update PY2022-2023

DSB's Outreach Manager participated in the Annual Neighborhoods, USA Conference, the Cross-Disability Summit hosted by Arkansas State Independent Living Council, the Developmental Disabilities Provider Association Annual Spring Conference, the Arkansas State Fair, and the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office Fall Festival.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts. VR staff attend job fairs and events in their regions. VR staff have also participated in partner efforts to expand information, such as events on ADA accommodations and transition question and answer sessions. DSB's Outreach Manager has participated in business expos, the City of Little Rock of Housing and Neighborhood Programs and connected with Baptist Health's Community Outreach program.

Performance Measure:

- Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will exhibit and make presentations at career fairs, health fairs, and other events in their area.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.

Performance Measures:

- Counselors will make at least four outreach efforts to faith-based groups in each of their geographic areas annually.
- Counselors will make at least two outreach efforts to minority groups to include Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will develop a new program to reach faith-based groups.
- DSB will provide outreach training for their counselors and staff.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will send supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and make presentations as requested.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB staff will attend the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the American Council for the Blind (ACB) state and national conference.
- DSB will participate with other state conferences of blindness and visual impairment organizations to network on issues faced by other states and gain ideas about how to better serve individuals.

Update PY2022-2023 Supervisors and administrative staff attended NFB and ACB

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field on the job site.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities.
- DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants.
- DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities.
- DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields.
- DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB counselors and Business Engagement Coordinator will develop more opportunities for participants to tour businesses and explore career opportunities.
- DSB counselors will arrange job shadowing, informational interviews and volunteer opportunities for participants to explore career fields.
- DSB counselors will accompany participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: DSB will become Chamber of Commerce members.

Performance Measure:

- VR counselors will make contact with at least two members of their local Chamber of Commerce per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses.

PY 2020-2021:

- Each DSB office will join their local Chamber of Commerce.
- DSB will obtain updated list of chamber business members.
- VR counselors and Business Engagement Coordinator will contact chamber businesses.
- DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB renewed 5 Chamber memberships in PY2020. In PY2021, DSB joined or renewed 17 chamber memberships. DSB is currently a member of 24 local chambers in the state of Arkansas. DSB staff attend as many chamber events as possible. In PY2021, DSB has attended 8 in person chamber events.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

Performance Measure:

- Counselors will conduct at least one presentation per year to the local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB counselors will conduct local presentations.
- Counselors will conduct COY presentations at local civic community clubs.

Update PY2022-2023 Due to Covid, PY2020 presentations were not done in group settings. IN PY2021, some staff were able to make group presentations to their COY. However, most still were informal due to Covid restrictions and consumer concerns about Covid.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district.

Performance Measures:

- DSB staff will establish at least one ongoing internship site per region for DSB participants.
- DSB staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will connect with employers in each economic development district.
- DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will develop internships and apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

Update PY2022-2023 The Business Engagement Coordinator has made contacts in all economic areas of the state through the local chambers of commerce. The local chambers have an array of different businesses to promote and partner with to achieve maximum employment

expansion for all DSB clients. This promotes the whole workforce system dynamic for complete community and economic development.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals, Building Bridges, and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will join our partner ARS to conduct at least one meeting with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB and ARS will conduct a meeting with providers to increase SE services in rural areas.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to transition students and out of school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE during the employment planning process.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE to youth who may be appropriate for supported employment and how to refer them to providers.

PY 2020-2021:

- Staff training on Supported Employment and Customized Employment will be conducted.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor. Six staff completed the Supported Employment Course with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants.

Performance Measure:

- At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about blindness and visual impairments.

PY 2020-2021:

- DSB will provide training for SE providers on blindness and vision impairments.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor.

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;

DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services, and assess possible needs for the Federal Fiscal Year 2021. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and Employers. In the Comprehensive Needs Assessment consumers indicated a desire for job services and extended supports on the job. The goals and priorities that DSB is focused on will support consumers in receiving more effective job services and improve connections with employers to assist consumers in long term job supports.

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

DSB has continued to track and maintain an internal analysis of the WIOA performance measures. DSB uses annual reports, monthly reports, and the required federal reports to track and evaluate its performance throughout the program year. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB was able to track the state performance on Measurable Skill Gains and work with ARS to develop a joint expected level for PY20 of 24% and PY21 of 25% for the state. DSB continues to track the employment rates for the program years to determine if they are improving and to measure the effectiveness of DSB's strategies. The data DSB gathers from these reports is used in consultation with its Independent Commission and RSA, to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency to move forward in setting applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

Update PY2022-2023 For Program Year 2020, the State of Arkansas reported the following rates:

Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit 60.4%

Employment 4th Quarter After Exit 57.2%

Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit \$5,696.34

Credential Rate 26.2%

Measurable Skill Gains Rate 54.6%

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.

DSB has not been monitored since 2011 but is scheduled for a monitoring visit in 2020. DSB has worked with RSA and WINTAC to improve effectiveness in serving participants. Under guidance from RSA and WINTAC, DSB has changed the manner in which it provides Pre-ETS services to both eligible and potentially eligible consumers. DSB has 7 counselors who serve all students with a disability, and youth age 14-16. These 7 counselors are overseen by the new Pre-ETS Manager to ensure that those who are VR eligible receive VR and Pre-ETS services as appropriate while those who are potentially eligible receive all applicable Pre-ETS services. These counselors manage a VR caseload and a separate Potentially Eligible consumer caseload to ensure that these services are received, and funds are expended correctly. As part of DSB's work to better meet RSA guidance our Pre-ETS counselors have been trained on and implemented a time allocation system.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB Field Staff complete monthly time allocation to effectively track the grants they are working under. DSB completed our monitoring visit and are actively working with RSA, the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management, the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: the Collaborative on our corrective action plan.

DSB counselors have received intensive on-site training at selected training centers for the blind and visually impaired. Training is provided on-the-job and monthly meetings are held with the Field Administrator regarding best practices, outreach, and locating work experience locations for the students. Monthly quality assurance reporting forms are turned in regarding each student and the 5 authorized PETS activities to verify that VR counselors are meeting the goals and objectives set forth in monthly meetings and so that ongoing supports can be arranged as needed.

Additionally, DSB has received intensive feedback on both our VR and Vending Facility Program (VFP) policy from RSA and WINTAC. This feedback has been used to improve and revamp DSB's policy manual with several chapters being prepared to move forward in the promulgation process. DSB continues to draft new policy based on provided feedback and work to ensure that all new policy meets the guidance and recommendations provided by RSA.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB promulgated six chapters of our new policy and continues to work with RSA and the Technical Assistance Centers on additional policy updates.

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

NA

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

NA

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

NA

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

NA

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

Most Significant Disability:

Most significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with the most significant disability whose impairment severely limits four or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

More Significant Disability:

More significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

Significant Disability:

Significant disability includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits one or two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

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

Should DSB implement an order of selection, it will elect to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

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

DSB's activities for supported employment services and programs funded under both Titles I and VI-B are intended to increase the number of persons receiving supported employment services and to improve employment outcomes for these individuals. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 emphasized the need for participants to have access to job placement, development, and extended job supports such as coaching or on the job training. DSB believes that the most effective and efficient strategy to accomplish this is by expanding and strengthening its collaborative linkages with relevant state agencies and/or private not-for-profit agencies for the provision of supported employment and extended support services. No more than 2.5% of supported employment grant funds will be used for administrative activities, including but not limited to, data collection and analysis, training, and consultation costs. The remainder of grant funds under Title VI, Part B will be used to purchase supported employment services under Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined eligible for supported employment. DSB will expend 50% or more of these funds on Youth with Disabilities

that need supported employment services. The State will provide a match of at least 10 percent in non-Federal expenditures for the total amount of expenditures incurred with half of the allotment reserved to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities, our focus being blindness or severe visual impairment. DSB's electronic case management system provides the ability to ensure that Title VI-B funding is the primary source of payment for supported employment services until that funding is exhausted, at which point funding continues to be provided through Title I. DSB projects to provide supported employment services to 15 individuals during PY 2020. As explained above, when necessary both Title VI-B and Title I funds will be used for the provision of services. To successfully meet the supported employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities (blind or visually impaired), DSB continues to improve its relationships with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services for the provision of extended services for supported employment clients. DSB counselors and vocational staff from the above agencies work together to identify individuals who would be appropriate referrals to DSB for supported employment services. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education to assure that youth with the most significant disabilities are accessing career, transition and employment services including supported employment services. DSB has worked to ensure best practices, so that the needs of youth with the most significant disabilities are met.

DSB counsels with those in subminimum wage situations who are blind and visually impaired to provide information and access to vocational rehabilitation to achieve competitive integrated employment in the community. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education, along with the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Medical Services to identify those that are blind and visually impaired age 24 or younger, so that the following occurs prior to the individual seeking work paying subminimum wage (less than Federal minimum wage): 1) During team consultations it is documented and ensured that the individual has received Pre-ETS or transition services under IDEA. 2) The individual was given an opportunity to apply for VR services. Placement in subminimum wage situations are considered only after the individual has been found ineligible for services, or has been determined eligible for VR services but has not been successful and has been provided career counseling, information and referral to other appropriate resources for services designed to assist the individual in attaining competitive integrated employment.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the VRTAC-QE to improve the Supported Employment program. This collaboration will improve existing policy, develop necessary forms and procedures for staff to ensure better Supported Employment Outcomes for DSB consumers.

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

DSB uses several vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired.

Half of the funds that DSB receives under the supported employment state grant will be used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years or until the youth turns 24, whichever occurs first.

DSB is developing an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to share the cost of extended services in supported employment.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the VRTAC-QE to improve the Supported Employment program. This collaboration will improve existing policy, develop necessary forms and procedures for staff to ensure better Supported Employment Outcomes for DSB consumers.

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.

DSB is partnering with ARS to develop an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to increase resources for extended services and expand supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB has been working closely with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and the Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI) to improve services and support available to youth with the most significant disabilities. As part of this work, DSB, ARS, HKNC, and CAYSI have begun a pilot project for Deafblind youth. The dual caseload collaborative process designed by DSB Staff has been taken by CAYSI to use as a model for other states.

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

VR Strategies DSB has developed the following VR strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers for Program Years 2020-2021 and updated for PY2020-2023.

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors will schedule and attend face-to-face job exploration meetings to interview human resource professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do those jobs. Performance Measures: A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month for each client in job-readiness status. DSB will provide additional training on conducting outreach. The DSB Quality Assurance Unit will develop methods to track employer contacts in AWARE and Salesforce.

Update PY2020-2023 Staff no longer have AWARE employer access and employer contacts are entered by Business Engagement allowing for consistent and accurate tracking. Counselor made 43 employer contacts for Program Year 2020, and 35 employer contacts in the first 2 Quarters of Program Year 2021. While contacts have been made more challenging due to the pandemic, DSB continues to work to increase contacts with employers and to provide staff training and support to improve outreach.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment. Performance Measures: VR Counselors will require three job contacts per

week. Assist job-ready participants with registration at Workforce Services. Assist job-ready participants with registering and applying for careers available through the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP); and assist participants with registering and applying for jobs through employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state and non-profit employers. VR counselors will update employer information in the AWARE module and Quality Assurance staff will implement a more effective use of the employer module. DSB will utilize the Salesforce program for tracking employer services.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Performance Measures: Through the DSB Small Business Coordinator, participants will be provided access to Small Business Association trainings and the Arkansas Secretary of State's trainings on small business enterprises. The counselors will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses. Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Field Services Administrator, the Small Business Coordinator, and the participant's VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. DSB will develop an updated brochure to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program. DSB will revise their policy and procedures for funding small businesses. DSB will coordinate a small business team to review proposals and provide training for VR counselors on completing a small business proposal.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB has developed a Small Business Committee and is working to update our policy on Small Business. In addition, DSB is designing a Small Business Brochure to share with consumers.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. Performance Measures: DSB will refer participants to apprenticeship programs across the state. DSB will refer participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education, and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including, but not limited to soft skills and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment. DSB will work with provider agencies to develop more high demand training for more high demand jobs. DSB will ensure that appropriate guidelines are in place to monitor providers and training. DSB will refer participants to Apprenticeship programs.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB continues to work with provider agencies to assist consumers. DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to provide training and support to staff on providing apprenticeships to consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. Performance Measures: DSB will refer 100% of clients, adults, students and youth on SSI and SSDI to the DSB benefits counselor for a one-on-one benefits analysis. Area Managers will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are referring 100% of SSI and SSDI VR participants to benefits counseling. Counselors will make participants aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure. New

counselors will receive benefits counseling training and current counselors will receive benefits counseling updates.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services. Performance Measures: DSB will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR services. VR counselors will make contact with agencies that serve older individuals such as Green Thumb, and AAA to seek referrals and to educate these agencies about DSB services.

Update: PY2022-2023 100% of clients who express interest in work will be referred to VR. DSB will work to develop a tracking mechanism for those clients who start as OIB but decide they wish to work. Clients who express interest in work at the beginning are immediately referred to VR. DSB staff work with local agencies to provide needed services to consumers. DSB also invites agencies to participate in the Older Blind Advisory Committee. Staff have connected with local assisted living centers and town hall meetings to educate communities on our services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers. Performance Measures: Each year each counselor will recognize one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year. DSB will award area Consumers of the Year and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

Update: PY2022-2023 All Pre-ETS caseloads submitted nominations for Student of the Year, and one overall winner was chosen. DSB had 20 VR caseloads submit a COY nomination, and DSB honored all COYs at the virtual December meeting in PY20 and PY21.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. Performance Measures: DSB will provide trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired. DSB's assistive technology staff will develop trainings that can be modified for small and large employers. DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness. Provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB staff will continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB recorded 41 Outreach contacts by counselors during Program Year 2020. DSB staff are now located in Workforce Centers and will work with outreach coordinator to ensure community awareness of programs available.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning. Performance Measures: Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and participate in specialized immersion training during their first six months. Training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association, Vision Quest, and other qualified sources. Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans. Novice counselors will attend Immersion training during their first six months. Counselors will attend specialized training with Louisiana Center for the Blind Mississippi State University and other

training opportunities. DSB will utilize the UofA Currents and online training opportunities to provide staff with professional trainings.

Update: PY2022-2023 Due to Covid 19 and travel restrictions no in person training has taken place. DSB Staff were provided the opportunity to participate in numerous virtual trainings through NRTC, Mississippi State University, University of Arkansas Currents, Helen Keller National Center, CSAVR, NFB, ACB, and the Technical Assistance Centers. DSB had staff participate in AER Pre-ETS trainings, Lead VR, and the Virginia Commonwealth University Supported Employment course.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants. **Performance Measures:** Peer mentoring will be used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support. Area Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs. Participants are connected to DSB Vendor Operators. A Peer Mentoring program will be developed for Pre-ETS students. Information will be provided on NFB and ACB organizations and utilize their members as mentors.

Update: PY2022-2023 Due to Covid 19 and restrictions we have not been able to implement these strategies. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and Field Administrator attended the NFB and ACB conferences.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA. **Performance Measures:** DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State. DSB Executive staff attend monthly WIOA Executive Roundtable meetings with all partners and serve on sub-committees to coordinate services. Staff attend bi-annual partner trainings. DSB executive staff will be active members of the State Workforce Investment Board and its committees.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB Staff serve on all WIOA Executive Roundtable Subcommittees. DSB Counselors and Supervisors sit on the WIOA local boards. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and some administrative staff attend the WIOA Partner's meetings each year. Both meetings were virtual in PY2020 and PY2021.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. **Performance Measures:** DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities. Counselors will connect participants to campus tours, assist students with FAFSA and college applications. Counselors will assist students with campus acclimation and introduce them to campus disability services.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB staff are available to assist consumers with necessary applications. Counselors arrange for O&M as well as introductions for consumers going to college.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities. **Performance Measures:** DSB will arrange for tours

of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities. DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for Pre-ETS students. DSB will arrange for informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities. DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for Pre-ETS students to explore career fields. DSB will accompany Pre-ETS students to career seminars and career fairs. DSB will arrange for and accompany Pre-ETS students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB will work with more vendors and businesses around the state to develop work experience, job shadowing, informational interviews, and career exploration opportunities. Pre-ETS counselors will explore career options with students and set up work experience and volunteer opportunities for students to gain “real experiences”. DSB will provide a three-weeks “Jump Start” program in which students will hear from company representatives, explore careers and gain work experience. Pre-ETS students will participate in job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews. DSB will conduct transition fairs and accompany students to other transition/career fairs.

Update: PY2022-2023 Students were still able to participate in virtual work-based learning experiences. Pre-ETS students were able to attend a virtual informational session with blind and visually impaired individuals who discussed their experience in the workforce and with creating their own businesses hosted by Ace Academy. In the first quarter of PY2021, DSB provided 32 Work-Based Learning Experiences to VR eligible Students with a Disability, and 21 Work-Based Learning Experiences to potentially eligible Students with a Disability.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations. Performance Measures: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB will conduct local transition summits with school districts across the state. DSB will participate in trainings with our core partners, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Arkansas Career Education (ACE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE). DSB will coordinate a training with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Vision Impaired (ASBVI) project.

Update: PY2022-2023 DSB participated in AER trainings and conferences. Staff also participated in trainings with Helen Keller National Center and Children And Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI).

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measures: Counselors will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students. The Pre-ETS Manager will review the database to ensure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants who input the local information and update the list monthly. Pre-ETS counselors will contact LEA Area Supervisors and have face to face meetings with school staff. Referrals identified by LEAs are sent to Pre-ETS counselors and the Pre-ETS Manager for review. Monthly reports of school contacts will be provided to the Pre-ETS Manager.

Update: PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors have continued to connect with LEA staff and meet face to face when allowed by schools during the pandemic. Pre-ETS staff submit monthly contact reports to their supervisor on all school contacts for that month.

Strategy: Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school. Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition

student will graduate without a current IPE. Pre-ETS counselors will develop and update IPEs of transition students before they graduate. Pre-ETS Counselors will facilitate a meeting with high school staff and college disability services for those attending college. The Pre-ETS manager will review and monitor the cases to ensure the IPEs are completed.

Update PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors maintain updated IPEs for VR eligible students with updates completed at least every 12 months. All potentially eligible students receive information on applying for VR services prior to graduating so that they may make the appropriate decision for their needs.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Performance Measures: Annually, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start—up costs. DSB will conduct an annual Back to School Parents Summit and parent summits in local areas.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB did conduct a virtual Back to School Summit in August 2020.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self—advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. Performance Measures: Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. Counselors will arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills in order for them to participate in career exploration services. Pre-ETS counselors arrange trainings in independent living skills and assistive technology for students and youth. DSB will consult with additional vendors to provide independent living and technology training. Pre-ETS counselors will refer students for appropriate trainings. The DSB Tech Lab will provide assistive technology trainings. DSB will provide assistive technology through its Assistive Technology Loaner Program.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB hosted an in person, one week, day Jump Start program that focused on independent living skills and technology for Pre-ETS Students. DSB also hosted a two-week virtual Jump Start through Ace Academy for students. DSB continues to work find new vendors. DSB added Ace Academy, Challenge Solutions, Superior Success, and Helen Keller National Center in the last year.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Performance Measures: DSB will present at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services. DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and schedule demonstration labs on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them. DSB will continue its system of mail outs and emails to public schools. DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools. Pre-ETS counselors will have face to face meetings with the schools.

Update PY2022-2023 Pre-ETS counselors have continued to connect with LEA staff and meet face to face when allowed by schools during the pandemic.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). Performance Measures: DSB will continue its system of mailouts and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB. Pre-ETS staff will meet with the ESVI team as a group to strengthen our working relationship. Pre-ETS counselors and ESVI consultants will refer students to each other's agency for appropriate services. Pre-ETS Manager will provide an updated list of students to the counselors. Pre-ETS staff will attend the annual AER conference.

Update PY2022-2023 All Pre-ETS counselors and additional DSB staff attended AER conference. While staff were not able to meet as a group, Pre-ETS counselors maintained contact with their local ESVI consultants, allowing them to continue to receive referrals to the Pre-ETS program.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area. Performance Measures: DSB will formulate an alliance with non-profit organizations established in the Delta region, to provide economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas. DSB will coordinate meetings with non-profits and agencies that are established in the Delta region, to provide information and trainings to individuals living in the Delta region of the state.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Performance Measures: Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory. Staff will increase participation at job fairs and health fairs.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts. DSB staff attend job fairs and events in their regions. DSB staff have also participated in partner efforts to expand information, such as events on ADA accommodations and transition question and answer sessions.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. Performance Measures: DSB will establish a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations. VR Counselors will make at least four faith—based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas annually. VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually. DSB will develop a new Faith-Based Outreach program. DSB will provide outreach training for their counselors and staff.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB outreach continues to be conducted by VR staff. However, DSB has also hired an Outreach Manager to assist with outreach efforts.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well. Performance Measures: DSB will continue to send supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested.

DSB staff will attend the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the American Council for the Blind (ACB) state and national conferences. DSB will participate with other state conferences of blindness and visual impairment organizations to network on issues faced by other states and gain ideas about how to better serve individuals.

Update PY2022-2023 Supervisors and administrative staff attended NFB and ACB.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants. DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: DSB will become Chamber of Commerce members. Performance Measures: VR counselors will make contact with at least two Chamber members per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses. Each Counselor will obtain an updated Chamber list for their area. Each DSB office will join their local Chamber of Commerce. VR counselors and the Business Engagement Coordinator will contact chamber businesses. DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB renewed 5 Chamber memberships in PY2020. In PY2021, DSB joined or renewed 17 chamber memberships. DSB is currently a member of 24 local chambers in the state of Arkansas. DSB staff attend as many chamber events as possible. In PY2021, DSB has attended 8 in person chamber events.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements. Performance Measure: At least one presentation per year will be given to the local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders by DSB counselors. Counselors will conduct COY presentations at local civic community clubs.

Update PY2022-2023 Due to Covid, PY2020 presentations were not done in group settings. IN PY2021, some staff were able to make group presentations to their COY. However, most still were informal due to covid restrictions and consumer concerns about Covid.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district. Performance Measure: DSB management staff will establish at least one ongoing internship site per region for DSB participants. DSB management staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants. DSB Business Engagement Coordinator will connect with employers in each economic development district and will develop internships and apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

Update PY2022-2023 The Business Engagement Coordinator has made contacts in all economic areas of the state through the local chambers of commerce. The local chambers have

an array of different businesses to promote and partner with to achieve maximum employment expansion for all DSB clients. This promotes the whole workforce system dynamic for complete community and economic development.

Supported Employment Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues. DSB will join ARS to conduct at least one meeting with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to Pre-ETS students and out-of-school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process. Performance Measures: DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE services to Pre-ETS transition youth. Staff trainings on Supported Employment and Customized Employment will be conducted.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor. Six staff completed the Supported Employment Course with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. Performance Measure: At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards. DSB will provide training for SE providers on blindness and vision impairments.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor.

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

A broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired as appropriate at each stage of the rehabilitation process in accordance with the individual's employment goal and IPE. The provision of assistive technology services and devices is based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the participant's IPE.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed in December 2019 for PY 2020 indicated that those requiring long-term support to maintain employment and those in rural communities were the most underserved populations. Overall job services and transportation were listed as the greatest barriers to employment for the underserved populations. In an effort to reach more communities DSB will continue to use a variety of outreach methods, such as exhibit booths, to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Additionally, DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. DSB will establish an agreement with organizations in the Delta Region to reach the most impoverished citizens of Arkansas. DSB will also enter into an agreement with the Urban League to reach minority populations and those unserved and underserved in the inner city areas of Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas. Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

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)

DSB works in conjunction with the Arkansas Education Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) and the Department of Education, Special Education Division to identify blind and visually impaired students. Most recently, DSB has expanded its outreach effort to include private schools, alternative schools, and accredited online high school systems. DSB is improving and expanding efforts by offering seminars and in person talks to these educational organizations to inform teachers, parents, and students of the services that are available. DSB offers Parent Summits to provide coordinated efforts to allow students and parents to learn about the options in blindness skills training, education, and employment services. DSB continues to provide a three-week transition learning experience for up to 30 students from across the state, which includes paid work experiences, lessons in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, financial literacy, independent living skills, career counseling, and planning for the future; the students are housed at Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and go home on weekends. DSB intends to expand this program throughout the State to offer students and youth an opportunity to receive services closer to the communities in which they live.

DSB is also working to offer work experience training, soft skills training, career counseling, and advocacy skills to pre—employment transition students throughout the State. DSB counselors use the Pre-ETS Counselor Guidebook to help prepare students for employment. This guidebook breaks down types of activities and skills related to each of the 5 core services to assist counselors in identifying needs and activities for students. DSB works regularly with Superior Success, and Challenge Solutions to provide trainings and work-based learning opportunities for students. DSB continues to work to identify new vendors to provide additional opportunities for students. DSB is currently working with ASBVI to develop an additional program for students to learn workplace readiness skills during the school year. Working with our Pre-ETS vendors, DSB has been able to offer both in person and distance learning opportunities for students around the state.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB was able to provide a virtual Jump Start program to Students with a Disability in PY2020. In PY2021, DSB offered a virtual and a in person day program for Jump Start to continue to provide Students with a Disability more opportunities. DSB has continued to provide Work-Based Learning Opportunities both virtually and in person to students.

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

DSB does not have any plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

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

DSB has continued to track and maintain an internal analysis of the WIOA performance measures. DSB uses annual reports, monthly reports, and the required federal reports to track and evaluate its performance throughout the program year. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB was able to track the state performance on Measurable Skill Gains and work with ARS to develop a joint expected level for PY20 of 24% and PY21 of 25% for the state. This level came from averaging the state results for PY17 and PY18. DSB continues to track the employment rates for the program years to determine if they are improving and to measure the effectiveness of DSB's strategies.

DSB will use the data gathered from its internal and federal reports to monitor progress towards the PY performance measures. These results will be used to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with blindness and visual impairment in Arkansas. Specifically, DSB will strive to increase the number of individuals who are employed and the wages of those individuals through labor market analysis, targeted counseling on job market areas and the availability of career tracks using Arkansas Labor Market statistics to help individuals make choices that will increase their employability and earning potential. DSB tracks the employment rate for 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit using the data submitted in the RSA 911. This data is also used to track the Retention with the Same Employer measure for DSB. The data for these measures is used to evaluate the effectiveness of DSB's implementation of the WIOA standards each PY and to continue to improve the results for DSB each PY. DSB is committed to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the six WIOA-required performance measures. DSB will continue to provide training to all DSB staff on the common measures and improve relationships with organizations in the Delta Region to reach the un-served and underserved minority populations in Southeast and South Arkansas. DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events, Lions Club International events, and provide outreach to local area businesses to demonstrate the capabilities and successes of blind and visually impaired Arkansans to enhance relationships and employer willingness to provide on-the-job trainings, apprenticeships, internships, volunteer opportunities, and job shadowing for those we serve. The business and technology section will host "technology talk" seminars and provide demonstrations on college campuses. This activity increases awareness, acceptance, and opens doors for employment opportunities. A Case Review team has been developed to conduct regular independent reviews of case files to offer advice and best practices on service provisions using the new Quality Assurance Tool in the AWARE case management system. At this time DSB has also hired a case auditor to conduct monthly case file audits on all caseloads to improve quality and accuracy in case files. DSB has begun to discuss topics related to vision loss on the radio and on local television news programs. DSB has increased the number of certified rehabilitation counselors in the last year. DSB will continue to seek out certified rehabilitation counselors and provide skills enhancement opportunities to the current staff. DSB

is working closely with World Services for the Blind to provide employment training tracks for our clients that result in careers.

Update: PY2022-2023 For PY2020, the State of Arkansas reported the following on our performance measures:

Employment (Q2) Rate 60.4

Employment (Q4) Rate 57.2

Median Earnings 5696.34

Credential Rate 26.2

Measurable Skills Gains Rate 54.6

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

DSB has cooperative agreements with local Workforce Investment Boards, which are updated as necessary. DSB also has cooperative agreements with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (a general agreement and a deafblind agreement). DSB, ARS, the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition—aged participants.

The DSB Director serves on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, which meets quarterly, and VR Counselors are members of the local Workforce Investment Boards, which meet quarterly across the state.

DSB counselors and support staff are now located in local Workforce Services' offices. Our technology lab staff are also located in the Little Rock office. Executive and administrative staff have moved to the Department of Commerce building with ARS, and Career Education partners.

DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for participants at Workforce Center locations. The original 10 kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks were placed in cities with either two—year or four—year Institutions of Higher Education. The kiosks provide participants the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from Workforce.

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

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

DSB and the DSB Board jointly developed the goals, priorities, and strategies based on input provided by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted in December 2019 for PY 2020 and input from key stakeholders. DSB's strategic plan is designed to provide participants with more access to those services the needs assessment identified as essential. Essential services were identified as job development and placement, employment preparation, on the job training, and soft skills development. The strategies are intended to position DSB 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 while addressing the concerns identified during the Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted in December 2019.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

DSB uses innovation and expansion funding to support the funding of our Statewide Independent Living Council. DSB has obtained a license for Salesforce to enhance the ability of DSB to coordinate business engagement efforts with partner agencies DSB will continue to provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newline application provided to all Arkansans. Counseling labs that are school based locations have been coordinated with the School for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition core services during the school day to groups of students.

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.

DSB recognizes the importance of providing equitable access and the opportunity to fully participate to individuals with disabilities. Based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DSB's efforts to reduce the limitations placed on participants in regards to technology and transportation have made an impact in allowing consumers to participate in VR services. The most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment indicated that Job Services, including Job Placement, were the most significant need of our consumers. DSB will continue to work with providers both in Arkansas and in neighboring states to offer more opportunities for direct job placement. DSB continues to work with partner agencies to locate more opportunities for job placement as well as to expand outreach to employers through our efforts with Business Engagement. Additionally, DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. DSB refers participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including but not limited to soft skills, and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment. DSB is continuing to work on strategies to improve those relationships and partnerships to ensure that more participants benefit from the services necessary to meet their need when it comes to employment preparation and soft skills development.

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: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors scheduled and attended face to face job exploration meetings to interview human resources professionals regarding the types of jobs they have and the skills needed to do these jobs.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Each counselor scheduled a minimum of two employer job exploration meetings per month.
- Staff attended Business Expos with Chamber of Commerce and exhibited at other events.
- DSB coordinated and shared information with ARS Business Relations staff.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21:

Staff no longer have AWARE employer access and employer contacts are entered by Business Engagement allowing for consistent and accurate tracking. Counselor made 43 employer contacts for Program Year 2020, and 35 employer contacts in the first 2 Quarters of Program Year 2021.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors required 3 job contacts per week for each job-ready status participants.
- Counselors are referring clients to Workforce, and TAP.
- Counselors are assisting participants to register and apply for jobs on employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state, and non-profit employers.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors provided participants with trainings on small business enterprises.
- Counselors scheduled job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB has developed a Small Business Committee and is working to update our policy on Small Business. In addition, DSB is designing a Small Business Brochure to share with consumers.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB refers participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, Adult Education, and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including but not limited to soft skills, and work readiness

training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive integrated employment.

- DSB refers participants to Apprenticeship programs.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB continues to work with provider agencies to assist consumers. DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to provide training and support to staff on providing apprenticeships to consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB refers 100% of clients, adults, students, and youth on SSI and SSDI to benefits counseling for a one-on-one benefits analysis.
- Counselors provide benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

Strategy: DSB will refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services.

Evaluation of Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB counselors refer OIB participants that are interested in employment to VR services.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

Clients who express interest in work are immediately referred to VR. DSB staff work with local agencies to provide needed services to consumers. DSB also invites agencies to participate in the Older Blind Advisory Committee. Staff have connected with local assisted living centers and town hall meetings to educate communities on our services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Individuals are recognized as area and state Consumer of the Year along with their employers.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

A long-term vacant caseload was the only one with no COY for Program Year 2020 and 2021. All Pre-ETS caseloads submitted nominations for Student of the Year, and one overall winner was chosen. DSB honored all COYs at the virtual December meeting both years.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- DSB provides trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.

- DSB continues to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB's Counselors are now located in 11 Workforce Services offices.
- DSB staff continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.
- The Pre-ETS program has set up a Technology Closet so that students can try out technology before purchasing equipment.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB staff are now located in Workforce Centers.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Evaluation of Progress PY18-19:

- Novice counselors attended a specific orientation to VR issues and participated in specialized training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Counselors were exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Evaluations of Progress PY20-21

DSB Staff were provided the opportunity to participate in numerous virtual trainings through NRTC, Mississippi State University, University of Arkansas Currents, Helen Keller National Center, CSAVR, NFB, ACB, and the Technical Assistance Centers. DSB had staff participate in AER Pre-ETS trainings, Lead VR, and the Virginia Commonwealth University Supported Employment course.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- Peer mentoring is used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Area Consumers of the Year provided peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.
- Peer mentoring was provided by NFB and ACB members
- Peer mentoring was provided to our Pre-ETS participants during Jump Start and other activities.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA.

Evaluation and Progress PY-18-19:

- DSB staff were active participants on the local Workforce Investment Boards throughout the state.
- DSB Executive staff were active members with the State Workforce Investment Board and participated on committees.
- DSB Executive Staff served on WIOA Executive Roundtable and committees.
- DSB staff attend WIOA Partners semi-annual trainings.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB Staff serve on all WIOA Executive Roundtable Subcommittees. DSB Counselors and Supervisors sit on the WIOA local boards. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and some administrative staff attend the partners meetings each year. Both were virtual in PY2020 and PY2021.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB counselors arranged for and accompanied job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.
- Counselors assisted participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-ETS to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB arranged for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities.
- Counselors arranged job shadowing, volunteer opportunities, and informational interviews for Pre-ETS students to explore job opportunities.
- DSB counselors arranged and accompanied students on college, vocational/technical and university campus visits.
- DSB provided a successful three-weeks Jump Start program in which students heard from business representatives, explored careers and gained work experience.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

Students were still able to participate in virtual work-based learning experiences. Pre-ETS students were able to attend a virtual informational session with blind and visually impaired individuals who discussed their experience in the workforce and with creating their own businesses hosted by Ace Academy. In the first quarter of PY2021, DSB provided 32 Work-

Based Learning Experiences to VR eligible Students with a Disability, and 21 Work-Based Learning Experiences to potentially eligible Students with a Disability.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Pre-ETS staff attended the state AER conferences
- DSB Pre-ETS staff were active participants with the state Transition Summit with representatives of the school districts
- DSB Counselors participated in Deaf-Blind Train the Trainer training with ARS, CAYSI, and Goodwill.
- DSB staff hosted and attended transition fairs statewide.

Evaluations of Progress PY20-21

DSB participated in AER trainings and conferences. Staff also participated in trainings with Helen Keller National Center and Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI).

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Counselors and Rehabilitation Assistants coordinated with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors maintained lists of transition students.
- Pre-ETS Manager reviewed the database to ensure it was properly maintained.
- Referrals from the LEA's were reviewed and sent to appropriate Pre-ETS counselor.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

Pre-ETS counselors have continued to connect with LEA staff and meet face to face when allowed by schools during the pandemic. Pre-ETS staff submit monthly contact reports to their supervisor on all school contacts for that month.

Strategy: VR Counselors continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Pre-ETS counselors developed and updated IPE's of transition students before they graduated.
- DSB Managers conducted case reviews to ensure that no transition student graduates without an IPE.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

Pre-ETS counselors maintain updated IPEs for VR eligible students with updates completed at least every 12 months. All potentially eligible students receive information on applying for VR services prior to graduating so that they may make the appropriate decision for their needs.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- Annually, DSB invites ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.
- DSB counselors conducted Transition Summits in local areas across the state.

Strategy: DSB continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB Counselors arranged trainings for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills for them to participate in career exploration services.
- DSB has established an Assistive Technology Loaner program for Pre-ETS students so that they can try out the equipment before purchasing.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB hosted an in person, one week, day Jump Start program that focused on independent living skills and technology for Pre-ETS Students. DSB also hosted a two-week virtual Jump Start through Ace Academy for students. DSB continues to work find new vendors. DSB added Ace Academy, Challenge Solutions, Superior Success, and Helen Keller National Center in the last year.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff presented at school assemblies, parent-teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services.
- DSB conducted face-to-face meetings with the school staff.
- DSB has established an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstrations on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.
- DSB continued its system of mail-outs and e-mails to public schools.
- DSB continue their outreach to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB continued its system of mail-outs and e-mails twice a year to area ESVI representatives.
- In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager networked with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.
- DSB referred participants under age 14 to ESVI and encouraged referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.
- Staff attended the annual AER conference.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB continue to expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB conducted outreach with organizations established in the Delta region, to provide economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Counselors and staff exhibited at widely attended or significantly relevant events in his/her territory to include health fairs, conferences, summits, and the Arkansas state fair.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB contracted with the state Independent Living Centers to conduct outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.
- These centers conducted at least 3 contacts a month with minorities and faith-based groups.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff and consumers attended both the NFB and ACB state and national conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested.
- DSB staff made presentations at the state NFB and ACB conferences.

Evaluations of Progress PY20-21

DSB has hired an Outreach Manager and a Business Engagement Coordinator to assist counselors with conducting outreach across the state. DSB Staff attended both NFB and ACB.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB arranged tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities.
- DSB arranged job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities.
- Volunteer opportunities were arranged for job ready adult participants to explore career fields.
- DSB staff accompanied job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB Staff received training and guidance on required supports and expectations for consumers in Job Ready Status. Staff also received training on how to identify consumers who should be placed in Job Ready Status. This training was at the July 2021 Field Services Meeting.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB renewed their membership with local Chamber of Commerce organizations across the state.
- VR counselors contacted business members to explore human resources trends and needs.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB renewed 5 Chamber memberships in PY2020. In PY2021, DSB joined or renewed 17 chamber memberships. DSB is currently a member of 24 local chambers in the state of Arkansas. DSB staff attend as many chamber events as possible. In PY2021, DSB has attended 8 in person chamber events.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- DSB Counselors conducted at least one presentation per year in their local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

Strategy: DSB management staff connect with employers in each economic development district.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB staff conducted outreach with employers in each economic development district.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

The Business Engagement Coordinator has made contacts in all economic areas of the state through the local chambers of commerce. The local chambers have an array of different businesses to promote and partner with to achieve maximum employment expansion for all DSB clients. This promotes the whole workforce system dynamic for complete community and economic development.

Supported Employment Goals:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB collaborated with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals, Ed Davis Inc. and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.
- DSB added new providers TEEM and Building Bridges that serves the southern region of the state to include the rural areas.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor. Six staff completed the Supported Employment Course with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to transition students and out-of-school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE during the employment planning process.

Evaluation and Progress PY 18-19:

- The Pre-ETS counselors identify youth who might be appropriate for SE and refer them to providers for services.
- DSB trains new staff and provides updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE to youth who may be appropriate for supported employment and how to refer them to providers.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor. Six staff completed the Supported Employment Course with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants.

Evaluation and Progress PY18-19:

- DSB partners with ARS to provide information and training to SE providers.

Evaluation of Progress PY20-21

DSB is working with the Quality Employment Technical Assistance Center to develop and improve our Supported Employment Program. DSB is also working with the Helen Keller National Center to become an SE vendor.

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

The largest factors that impedes the achievement of the VR goals and priorities are staff turnover among DSB's field staff. We have consistently had an average of 8 vacancies among the counselors and support staff during the last year. As a result of an internal audit of our provision of Pre-ETS services, we discovered the need to develop and implement new policies and procedures. We were fortunate to work with WINTAC during this process. As a result, the staff received additional training and new process was implemented in January 2020.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB struggled to connect with vendors, employers, and consumers during the pandemic due to concerns over health and safety. DSB staff worked to find methods to overcome these barriers, such as zoom and telemeetings, but they did impact success of strategies. DSB continued to struggle with vacancies in part due to a hiring freeze at the end of Program Year 2020.

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

DSB continued to enlist new SE providers that provide services to the blind and visionally impaired, to include TEEM and Building Bridges that serve the rural and under served population.

DSB's Field Administrator serves on the state APSE Board and works with other APSE members to enhance supported employment opportunities across the state. DSB staff serve on the conference committee, and the next statewide conference will be March, 2020.

DSB has been able to refer youth up to age 24 to supported employment services. Students that enroll in our Jump Start program explore different career options and some of these individuals are referred to community rehabilitation providers for services.

A new vendor application and monitoring forms were developed for the community rehabilitation providers and training was provided.

DSB encouraged participants' family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

DSB works with ARS and providers to provide training for the SE providers.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB continues to work to grow providers. DSB is now working with the VRTAC-QE to improve Supported Employment Outcomes.

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

The largest factor that impedes the achievement of the supported employment goal is the lack of statewide community rehabilitation programs offering supported employment to the blind and visually impaired. DSB has enlisted some new providers, including TEEM and Building Bridges to serve the Delta (under served) rural area. DSB has a low number of consumers with most significant disabilities that need supported employment services in order to obtain and retain employment.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB continues to work to grow providers. DSB is now working with the VRTAC-QE to improve Supported Employment Outcomes.

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

DSB continues to work on improving understanding and accuracy of its reporting and measuring of the performance accountability measures for Section 116 of WIOA. Using the data reported on the RSA 911 and ETA 9169, DSB has worked to stay informed about our performance measures to develop guidance on our expected levels of performance. Using the ETA 9169 for PY17 and PY18, DSB met with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to determine an expected Measurable Skill Gains Rate for the state. In PY17, Arkansas achieved 22.7% Measurable Skill Gains, and in PY18 we achieved 25.2%. Both agencies have been working to improve accuracy in documenting our measurable skill gains and intend to continue to do so moving forward. DSB and ARS averaged the 2 previous year's performance to obtain the rate of 23.9%. Therefore, the agencies mutually agreed that a suggested target of 24% for PY 2020 and 25% for PY 2021 gave us confidence in our ability to achieve the rate and continue to improve accuracy for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

Based on the data reported in the RSA 911, DSB continues to monitor and track performance measures related to WIOA. In Program Year 18, DSB reported 131 participants (33%) to be employed in the 2nd Quarter After Exit, 65 Participants (18.4%) to be employed in the 4th Quarter After Exit, and 46 participants (35%) to have retained employment with the same employer in 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit. DSB continues to track the data for PY 19 as there is a delay in wage quarter reporting. As a state Arkansas reported a median 2nd Quarter earnings of \$5240.93, while DSB reported \$6,623.43 as an agency. DSB continues to work on improving its measures and working with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to ensure consistency, accuracy, and growth in our performance measures for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

Update PY2022-2023 For Program Year 2020, the State of Arkansas reported the following rates:

Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit 60.4%

Employment 4th Quarter After Exit 57.2%

Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit \$5,696.34

Credential Rate 26.2%

Measurable Skill Gains Rate 54.6%

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

DSB used innovation and expansion funding to support the funding of our Statewide Independent Living Council. DSB has obtained a license for Salesforce to enhance the ability of DSB to coordinate business engagement efforts with partner agencies. DSB will continue to provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newsline application provided to all Arkansans, including now being able to live stream the service. Counseling labs that are school based locations have been coordinated with the School for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition core services during the school day to groups of students.

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

DSB remains committed to increasing the quality, scope and extent of Supported Employment Services to eligible consumers. During PY 2018, DSB used vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired.

Supported employment services are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual as specified in the individualized plan for employment (IPE), and are provided by the VR agency for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE. Prior to job placement in supported employment, individuals with the most significant disabilities receive VR services identified in the IPE, and which the VR counselor and the individual have determined will lead to achievement of the supported employment outcome. Supported employment services, also identified on the IPE, begin at the time of the individual's job placement. Ongoing services are furnished by the VR agency, using funds under the Supported Employment program and/or the VR program, from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services providers, including the VR agency, in accordance with 34 CFR §363.4(a)(2), throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement.

During PY2018, DSB increased the number of individuals who received supported employment services by increasing the number of providers. Some of our providers include: Goodwill, World Services for the Blind, Sources, Arkansas Support Network, Building Bridges, Ed Davis Inc. Easter Seals, and S.W. Chance.

DSB participated with trainings in which DOL ODEP Subject Matter Experts provided on supported employment with providers. These trainings also included state leaders in a planning session in which our Director and Field Administrator attended.

DSB continued to utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Education-Special Education Unit, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Adult Services and Behavior Health Services. This MOU defines each agency's roles and responsibilities toward competitive integrated employment for individuals with most significant disabilities. This partnership also supports on-going Employment First activities for the state.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, provides training Supported Employment providers, along with certification of Job Coaches. DSB supports these trainings rather than duplicating.

DSB are members of Arkansas APSE and the Field Administrator serves on the Board of Directors. We supported the bi-annual statewide APSE conference.

Update PY2022-2023 DSB is working with the VRTAC-QE to improve the Supported Employment program and enhance the opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities. DSB is currently working with HKNC and CAYSI to improve services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

Ongoing services are furnished by the VR agency, using funds under the Supported Employment program and/or the VR program, from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services providers, including the VR agency, throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement. In addition, funds allotted under the Supported Employment program or the VR program may be used to provide extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities as authorized under section 604(b)(2) of the Act. However, extended services may not be provided by the VR agency using funds allotted under either the Supported Employment program or the VR program to an individual who is not a youth with a disability. DSB provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of time not to exceed four years, or until a youth reaches the age of 25 and is no longer considered a "youth with a disability," whichever occurs first.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) 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

Division of Services for the Blind

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

Divisions of Services for the Blind

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

Cassandra Williams-Stokes

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

DSB Director

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	Division of Services for the Blind
Name of Signatory	Cassandra Williams-Stokes
Title of Signatory	Director
Date Signed	[2/28/2020]

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.	

The State Plan must include	Include
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)	Yes
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	No
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, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	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	

The State Plan must include	Include
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	
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,	

The State Plan must include	Include
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	
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 State Plan must include	Include
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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.9		60.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.9		49.0	

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5317.7		5400	
Credential Attainment Rate	21.9		23	
Measurable Skill Gains	50.0		51.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

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