VR Portion of WIOA State Plan for Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind FY-2018

Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

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

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* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

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

1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council’s functions;

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

3. All State plan requirements will apply

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

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) has cooperative agreements with the following agencies not carrying out activities under the statewide Workforce Development System: Arkansas Educational Television Network; Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; 33 Institutions of Higher Education; Arkansas Department of Education Special Education Unit (ADE SEU); Educational Services for the Visually Impaired; 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: •agreement between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), DDS, DBHS, ADE SEU, and DSB for increasing the number of individuals in competitive employment and expanding Supported Employment •agreement between ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Pre-ETS •agreement between World Services for the Blind and DSB regarding Pre-ETS

Coordination with Arkansas Department of Human Services:

DSB serves all 75 counties in Arkansas. Although VR counselors currently have base offices in DHS facilities in 10 geographic locations around the state, DSB is in the process of mapping out the plan to co-locate with local Workforce Centers as provided in WIOA.

Co-location: DSB is in the process of coordinating with the state and the local Workforce Boards to finalize Infrastructure Funding Agreements. The infrastructure agreement meetings with the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) and other WIOA partners consist of outlining the costs attributable to DSB for its occupancy plans and ensuring they meet cost allocation standards. DWS has 22 comprehensive offices in which DSB will have a staff presence, and satellite offices to include a physical presence at least one-half day, twice a month. All partners will have an
electronic presence statewide. A master plan is being developed to transition staff from DHS offices starting July 1, 2018.

Leadership Training: DSB continues to coordinate with DHS Divisions by, including but not limited to, participating in “Leadership in a High-Performance Culture” workshops and other training for managers and supervisors. Other Leadership trainings include CSAVR, WIOA Partnership, UA CURRENTS Supervisor Academy and Vision Quest.

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

Access — The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the DHS Office of Systems 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 DHS 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. DSB has a DHS Share account and expects the 508 Enhancements project to benefit its employees who are blind or visually impaired. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some Google mail and Google apps, working with some other states that are migrating to put their emails out on the Google system. However, DSB will be using an internal Office 365 cloud program until other technology systems are identified.

Assessments for assistive technology are completed by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has trained VR Counselors to 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.
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.

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

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

4. **Noneducational 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. **DSU’s plans**

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

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) • 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 2017 in Little Rock 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 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 to reach participants throughout the state.

Transition Planning DSB 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.

Secondary schools invite DSB 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. 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 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, infirmary 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 exposed 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.

Responsibilities

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.

Outreach Procedures

DSB continues to follow directives to improve communication with schools. Field Services Directive 08—06 was developed for contacting schools and distributing information at least semi—annually. Per the directive, each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters and information to contacts on the list. In 2011 an email option was added. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

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 IPE 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. 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. The interagency agreement outlined 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.
PETS Pre-ETS services include five core areas: Job exploration counseling: these are services to assist the student in exploring the world of 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. In order to reach these goals DSB is ensuring 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.

DSB will begin working with students as early as age 16. Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged as soon as possible, but the time shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. 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 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 liaison 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.

Transition in Regards to Section 511 -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 new Memorandum of Agreement is being 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 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 16. The IPE is developed no later than 90 days after eligibility is determined. DSB works to develop IPEs at age 16 and every year until the student transitions out of high school. Secondary schools invite DSB 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. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) 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-Graduation) 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, 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.

In order to reach these goals, DSB is ensuring our seven 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.

Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged throughout the school year and in the summer. Planning and implementation will begin as soon as possible, the time 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 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,
Transition in Regards to Section 511 - 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, achieving at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A new Memorandum of Agreement is being 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 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 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. Roles and Responsibilities 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 Development 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.

VR 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. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. DSB will 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 will continue its system of mail—outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI Consultants. In addition to the local outreach efforts, the Transition Coordinator 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 held a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2017 in Little Rock and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits with the next one planned for 2018 and the following years. 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 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 that do outreach to participants throughout the state.

DSB continues to follow directives to improve communication with schools. Field Services Directive 08—06 was developed for contacting schools and distributing information at least semi—annually. Per the directive, each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters and information to contacts on the list. In 2011 an email option was added. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. Outreach for PETS and WIOA Section 511 PETS required activities 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 must 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 PETS, and how to access DSB services to engage in exploration of competitive integrated employment settings.
  2. All DSB transition counselor staff are to 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 will be taken both digitally and by paper referral process.
  3. All DSB transition counselor staff along with the Statewide Field Administrator will 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.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

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

DSB 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 accepted an invitation from the Helen Keller National Center 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 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 Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN), 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

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

DSB provides SE services through World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries.

DSB, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (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 agreement produced an interagency steering committee which worked on supported employment issues. During its formulation, the steering committee was facilitated by the EmployAbility Project, a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program that was housed in the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Extended Services

Each of the SE services providers: World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries, will be responsible for extended services.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. The standard post-employment extended service support service under supported employment is 24 months.

Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the money that Arkansas 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.

Each of the SE services providers: World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries, will be responsible for extended services as noted above. S.W. Chance, Ed Davis Inc., Arkansas Support Network and TEEM are new SE service providers DSB added in 2017-18. A new Supported Employment Vendor Application was developed to improve client and vendor service delivery.
g. Coordination with Employers

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5)). Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR services; and

DSB has designated a minimum of 26% of the workday of each counselor to be devoted to developing 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 24 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 May 1, 2018. 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. 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. 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.

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 active 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 with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated 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 with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children’s Behavioral Health Care Commission. Also, 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.

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

   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 with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. 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**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10). Describe the designated State agency’s procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:
1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

A. Qualified Personnel Needs.

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

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

Procedures for evaluating progress: The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is dedicated to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and support staff. DSB has a strong commitment to providing and making available training programs especially for staff that provide direct services to participants. The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) supports a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as required by Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. DSB’s CSPD Plan is aimed at securing and maintaining an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals to provide rehabilitation services to blind and severely visually impaired individuals. DSB requires VR Counselors to be certified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) or at minimum be qualified to be certified and working toward certification. These state standards are consistent with national standards requiring recognized certifications for personnel providing vocational rehabilitation services. The DSB Staff Development Coordinator, Field Services Administrator, and Area Field Supervisors monitor progress by staff to meet CSPD standards. An employee that declares retirement receives a lower priority in attaining the CSPD standard, but is required to complete designated coursework to increase rehab expertise. Counselors have established timeframes (seven years from date of hire) to meet the requirements or face reclassification and demotion or other measures. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors receive priority in training for CSPD requirements.

The spring 2017 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. Effective July 1, 2017, 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.

Caseload Data Projected Number of Replacement Staff in the Next Five Years -DSB anticipates an elevated level of retirement among its experienced staff in the next five years. It is expected that there will be a fairly regular replacement rate for staff during the next five years. For FFY 2017, the 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year. The number of staff on hand as of the December 2017 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows: Division of Services for the Blind operates with 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab
Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 8 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 22 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a masters’ degree in Vocational Rehab Counselling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3-week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24-hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly.

Category Over the next 5 years

Total Positions
Administrative Staff 21 -filled 2-vacancies 0-projected vacancies
Counselor Staff 23-filled 7-vacancies 2-projected vacancies
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities 22-filled 3-vacancies 2-projected vacancies

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

The Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and support staff. DSB has a strong commitment to providing and making available training programs especially for staff that provide direct services to participants.

Current Staffing Levels
The number of staff on hand as of the December 2017 Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 8 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 22 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. DSB created 2 new job responsibilities to implement WIOA activities. The Transition Coordinator was hired March 2018 to manage Pre-ETS related activities. DSB is in the process recruiting for the Business Engagement Coordinator position. The anticipated date for the position to be filled is May 1, 2018. 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. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a masters’ degree in Vocational Rehab Counseling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3-week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24-hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly. For FFY 2017, the 30 VR caseloads had an
average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year.

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.

Projected Number of Replacement Staff in the Next Five Years DSB anticipates an elevated level of retirement among its experienced staff in the next five years. It is expected that the replacement will have minimal impact on agency outcomes during this time period. For FFY 2017, the 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year. The number of staff on hand as of the December 2017 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows: Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 8 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 22 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a masters’ degree in Vocational Rehab Counseling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3-week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24-hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly. Total Positions Administrative Staff 21 -filled 2-vacancies 0-projected vacancies Counselor Staff 23-filled 7-vacancies 2-projected vacancies Staff Supporting Counselor Activities 22-filled 3-vacancies 2-projected vacancies

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 Staff Development Coordinator attempts to maintain contact with the institutions of higher education to gather data. Turnover of staff at the IHE’s may prevent timely collection of graduation rates and student success 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. Of the 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students. Employees Sponsored by ARS and/or RSA, 27 full-time and 11 part-time. Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a MS in Psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a Masters Rehabilitation Counseling program, which is housed in the Psychology and Counseling Department. Of the 17 students enrolled, there were 13 full—time, including three with disabilities and four who are minorities, and there were four part—time students, including one with a disability and two who are minorities. Of these, 50% (three) are working in community counseling agencies, one has been accepted into a doctoral program to pursue a PhD in Rehabilitation, one is taking some time off to spend with family, and one is currently looking for work. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program. University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer Master’s degree programs in Rehabilitation Services, but do offer Bachelor degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
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 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 Masters of Arts. The Spring 2018 RCE program at UALR has 116 students enrolled. Of these students there are 49 full—time, 67 part—time. The Fall 2017 had 127 students enrolled. Of these students there are 53 full-time, 74 part-time. Graduates in Fall 2016-2017, 17 graduated in Fall 2016, 17 graduated in Spring 2017, and 5 in Summer 2017. In the Fall 2018 there are 18 graduates.

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. Of the 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students. Employees Sponsored by ARS and/or RSA, 27 full-time and 11 part-time.

Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a MS in Psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of North Texas (UNT) 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.

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer Master’s degree programs in Rehabilitation Services, but do offer Bachelor degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.
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 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 Masters of Arts. The Spring 2018 RCE program at UALR has 116 students enrolled. Of these students there are 49 full—time, 67 part—time. The Fall 2017 had 127 students enrolled. Of these students there are 53 full-time, 74 part-time. Graduates in Fall 2016-2017, 17 graduated in Fall 2016, 17 graduated in Spring 2017, and 5 in Summer 2017. In the Fall 2018 there are 18 graduates.

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University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer Master’s degree programs in Rehabilitation Services, but do offer Bachelor degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

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, the DHS personnel office posts DSB vacancies on the DHS website, the state employment website arstatejobs.com, the DHS Intranet site, the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and
university recruitment bulletins. The DSB Personnel Section 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 Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling

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: Arkansas State University (ASU) Location: Jonesboro Programs: Masters in Psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Institution: University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) Location: Pine Bluff Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

Institution: Arkansas Tech University (ATU) Location: Russellville Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

Effective July 1, 2017, 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 GS09 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 work closely with the universities to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students, and notifies 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 (UAF), the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), Arkansas State University (ASU), and Arkansas Tech University (ATU). 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 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) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

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 2017 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. In FY 2015, DSB had seven interns to include 5 females and two males. One minority female from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program from Arkansas State University has been hired full—time.

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, 2017, 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 GS09 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 in FY 2017, DSB had one intern to include 1 female. One Caucasian female was from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program from University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

As of the December 2017 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Not certified; 8 VR Counselors with CRC. 4 VR Counselors anticipating taking CRC exam October 2018. 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 2017 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.

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4. Staff Development.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. System of staff development

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

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.

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.

- The Oklahoma and Texas Departments of Rehabilitation Services again gave DSB staff four spots in their leadership training program Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS), which was developed in conjunction with TACE.

- The Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE) provides opportunities for training DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to take the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) exam. Although DSB is eligible, no slots will be used this year due to the distance of exam locations. When the exam was being given in Louisiana in FY 2013, four DSB staff took the exam, with three passing and becoming CESP’s. This certification falls in line with DSB’s training plan.

- In—house training is provided through DSB’s 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, and DWS SharePoint. 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.

- DSB has applied for technical assistance training through the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) to enhance existing standards and programs required to address the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement between WINTAC and DSB will serve as a guide for continued development of staff.

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. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge**

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

DSB 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
Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods: • When it was operating Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center periodically surveyed rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and developed courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies. From 2011 through the 1st quarter of 2014, TACE 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. As we move forward with WIOA and the emerging new Technical Assistance Centers, DSB is working with the WINTAC towards Job Driven practices/best practices, best practices in pre-employment transition services, addressing section 511 subminimum wage requirements, and performance accountability. DSB in combination with Arkansas General is working with the Transition Technical Assistance Center of the University of North Carolina to improve and strengthen the transition program.

• The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) provides opportunities for training DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to take the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) exam. Although DSB is eligible, no slots will be used this year due to the distance of exam locations. When the exam was being given in Louisiana in FY 2013, four DSB staff took the exam, with three passing and becoming CESP’s. This certification falls in line with DSB’s training plan.

• In-house training is provided through DSB’s 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, and DWS SharePoint. 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.

Appropriate modes of communication, including sign language interpreters, are available on a contractual basis. The directive to utilize the contracts has been provided to all staff and is on file in each DSB office; it is also in DSB policy.

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 has begun work 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**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

1. **Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:**

A. **with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services:**

DSB conducts a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment at least every three years and the results are used in developing goals in the State Plan and providing services to participants who are blind or severely visually impaired. The most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment was conducted in 2015, and had 229 respondents. DSB plans to coordinate future needs assessment with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services as well as other WIOA partners if available. The last Needs Assessment indicated that assistive technology and access to affordable transportation are the top most significant barriers to employment. The third most critical barrier is the need for direct job placement assistance. The DSB technology lab is implementing changes to provide assistive technology recommendations at a faster turn- around rate; the lab is scheduling appointments for assistive technology evaluations within seven days of receipt of requests. Evaluations are being provided within five days of the assessment. Transportation continues to be a significant need. DSB is continually searching for affordable vehicular transportation services for clients and arranges for payment of these services when appropriate to the plan and goal. DSB has identified drivers and vetted those drivers through background checks and screenings in order to qualify them to drive for clients. DSB will continue these
efforts to offer transportation services throughout the State. Lastly, clients have asked for direct job placement assistance. DSB has worked with providers in neighboring states and negotiated agreements for these providers to expand into Arkansas to provide direct job placement assistance. DSB counselors have been provided continuing education training on providing direct job placement assistance to clients. DSB has also partnered with Workforce Services to locate current job openings in order to meet with employers and negotiate direct placements for participants. 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.

The need for supported employment services throughout the State was indicated as a service that requires improvement throughout the State. The rural areas have a lack of supported employment vendors for the blind and visually impaired. DSB is working with community rehabilitation programs throughout the State to locate and hire qualified staff that can provide O&M training, low vision interventions, and supports on the job to make supported employment outcomes successful for the blind and visually impaired. The shift to focus on expending 50% of the Supported Employment reserve on Youth with Disabilities that need supported employment services was not specifically addressed on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Comments on the Assessment did indicate that those in subminimum wage situations who are blind and visually impaired want information and access to vocational rehabilitation to achieve competitive integrated employment in the community. To that end DSB is working 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, and those above age 24 to offer supported employment services.

**B. who are minorities;**

During the DSB 2015 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment 30% of respondents identified themselves as a minority. These respondents have needs in the following areas: Of these respondents, they identified transportation as their most urgent need, next was understanding and acquiring assistive technology devices and services, and the third highest need was identified as job placement assistance.

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

15% of respondents identified their areas as unserved or underserved. All of these respondents lived in south Arkansas, which historically has some of the highest unemployment in the state. The most frequently identified need of this subset was job placement assistance/assistance with locating available employment opportunities, the second most identified need was transportation, and the third was learning activities of daily living as a blind individual.

DSB is reaching out to those identified as blind and visually impaired and as being HIV positive through the Department of Medical Services. Staff training on appropriate interventions in addressing the needs of this population have been developed and implemented.
D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

This information was not captured in the needs assessment.

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

17% of respondents were youth/students who are blind or severely visually impaired. Low vision technology and job placement tied as their highest needs. After these came college prep and tuition.

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

Issues affecting supported employment in Arkansas include: the limited number of service providers statewide; the rural nature of the state; the lack of consistent available funding for extended services; and the lack of knowledge, experience, and training SE providers have in the provision of supported employment services and placement for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

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.

This question was not addressed in the 2015 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. It is DSB’s understanding, from working with the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP) and the Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State that individuals with significant blindness and low vision require transition career services and pre-employment transition services particularly in the following areas:

1. Job Exploration Counseling. Students need an understanding of the real world careers available in the areas in which they wish to live. Students need to be educated on career pathways and the training required, along with the earning potential of those careers prior to selecting an employment goal.

2. Work Experiences. Our students require exposure to real world settings in employment. It is through job shadowing, internships, and volunteer opportunities that students have an understanding of the job functions and what will be meaningful to them.

DSB did not address in the CSNA the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. However, DSB understands that coordination of transition services with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education is essential to providing comprehensive services to students that are blind and low vision. Working with ESVI and the teachers for the visually impaired throughout the state, we have formulated team meetings to address the needs of our students, which include both PETS services and traditional VR services. The Expanded Core Curriculum now available through the school system addresses workplace readiness training to develop
social skills and independent living. Transition counselors and school personnel are working together to provide those services in a school setting as provided by IDEA.

k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

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

Basis for Estimates—DSB uses census data, 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:

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($2,863 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 686 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.

Estimates for Part B of Title VI:

DSB estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 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 estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 participants. Of this number, it is projected that 686 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 estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 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 estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($2,632 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 686 will be minorities.

I. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The 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 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: 1) Increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. 2) Increase pre-employment transition services to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth. 3) Expand outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as those who are unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. 4) Increase coordination with employers.

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

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. • Performance Measure: 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 Small Business Coordinator will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses. • Performance Measure: Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Administrator, 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. • Performance Measure: A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB’s small business self-employment program.

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 employment.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are referring 100% of SSI and SSDI VR participants to the benefits counselor. • Performance Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well. Performance Measure: DSB and its OIB contractor will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR.

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 and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year. • Performance Measure: DSB will award area Consumers of the Year and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. Performance Measure: DSB will provide trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.
Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab. Performance Measure: DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: 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.

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 Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

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 Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: 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.

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.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. • Performance Measure: DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

Goal 2: Increase pre—employment transition services to high school students; increase transition services to out—of—school youth.

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.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measure: Counselors/Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students. The Supervisor over transition will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information.
Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measure: Counselors/Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of where transition students are located. 

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure 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 insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

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 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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will make face—to—face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories. Performance Measure: VR Counselors will have from the beginning of the school year to May 1st, to complete the face—to—face visits with LEA Supervisors.

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 Measure: Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. • Performance Measure: Counselors will arrange for training for pre—employment transition students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills in order for them to participate in career exploration services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. • Performance Measure: DSB will present at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on pre—employment transition services and how to access these services. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail—outs and emails to public schools. • Performance Measure: DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). • Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail—outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. • Performance Measure: DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.
Strategy: DSB will ensure that all pre—employment transition students and pre—employment transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for pre—employment transition students to explore potential career opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for pre—employment transition students. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for informational interviews for pre—employment transition students to explore job opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for pre—employment transition students to explore career fields. • Performance Measure: DSB will accompany pre—employment transition students to career seminars and career fairs. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for and accompany pre—employment transition students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.

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 Delta Circles, a non—profit organization 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. Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. • Performance Measure: DSB will establish a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations. • Performance Measure: VR Counselors will make at least four faith—based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas annually. • Performance Measure: VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually.

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 continue to send all of its supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested.

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 Measure: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. • Performance Measure: DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.
Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members. Performance Measure: VR counselors will make contact with at least two Chamber members per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses.

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.

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. • Performance Measure: DSB management staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS PY 2016 — PY 2019 July 1, 2016 — June 30, 2020

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. Performance Measure: At least one meeting will be held with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to pre—employment transition 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 Measure: DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE services to pre—employment transition youth.

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.

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 conducts a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment at least every three years and the results are used in developing goals in the State Plan and providing services to participants. The most recently completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment was conducted in 2015, and had 229 respondents.

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
DSB continues to transition into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, 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.

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 was monitored by RSA in 2011. As a result, DSB adjusted goals and strategies to better serve the blind and visually impaired community in correlation with RSA’s findings. Improving transition services and increasing employment outcomes for youth with disabilities and students with disabilities became a main goal. The report indicated, "From FY 2006 through FY 2010, DSB experienced similar declines in performance with respect to the number of transition-age youth served and those who achieved employment as it did for all of its consumers. According to Table 2.1, the number of transition-age youth served by DSB declined from 63 in FY 2006, to 56 in FY 2010, a difference of 11.1 percent. ...the number of transition-age youth who exited the VR system with an employment outcome after receiving services decreased from 25 in FY 2006, to 20 in FY 2009. In FY 2010, this figure sharply declined to 12."

To improve services and focus on this population, DSB has added 7 positions that are dedicated to pre-employment transition services and transition services. These counselors 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.

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. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

NA

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.

NA

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 Division 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. DSB will continue to expend available grant funds obtained under Title VI, Part B (Supported Employment Services), towards the administration of the supported employment program and the purchase of services in accordance with the WIOA proposed rules of April 16, 2015. 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 30 individuals during FFY 2016 and to 35 individuals during FFY 2017. 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 is building 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.

Section 511 goals and priorities

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-
employment transition services 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.

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. The services begin with identifying blindness
skills, addressing psychological and social needs, and then moving on to skills training,
placement and job coaching.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an
integrated employment setting working towards integrated competitive employment. This
includes customized employment. The standard post-employment extended support service
under supported employment is 24 months.

Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the money 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.

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.

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.

Extended Services
Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. The standard post-employment extended support service under supported employment is 24 months. Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the funds that Arkansas 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. DSB is developing an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Developmental Disabilities to share the cost of extended services in supported employment.

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. The performance measures are included with the goals in a previous section. Here are the strategies:

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.

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

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

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

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

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind and interested in employment to VR and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well.

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

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

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.

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.
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.

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

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

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

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

Strategy: DSB will maintain a database of transition students.

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

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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will make face-to-face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories.

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.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). Strategy: DSB will ensure that all pre-employment transition students and pre-employment transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

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

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

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to 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.

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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members.
Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

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

Innovation and Expansion Activities

DSB will continue the implementation of its new data management system and will begin building data into the employer module that will contain information about employers and job openings.

DSB has developed the following SE strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers. The performance measures are included with the goals in a previous section. Here are the strategies:

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.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether pre—employment transition youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process.

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

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.

DSB will use a variety of outreach methods, such as exhibit booths, to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. DSB will establish an agreement with Delta Circles 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 22 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.

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

DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants. 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 increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards.

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

DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, in consultation with RSA and its Independent Commission in the development of a baseline of performance percentages for the agency to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

DSB will address areas of deficiency from our recent FFY Standards and Indicators measures 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.
Additionally, DSB commits to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the six WIOA-required performance measures, and will use findings from our Standards and Indicators in this endeavor. DSB will continue to provide training to all DSB staff on the common measures and improve relationships with Delta Circles and the Delta Regional Authority to reach the unserved 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, 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. Case Review teams have been developed to conduct monthly independent reviews of case files to offer advice and best practices on service provisions. 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.

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 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;

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

DSB will continue to improve the data management system in regards to WIOA implementation. Efforts to begin building data into the employer module will contain information regarding
employers and job openings. DSB will provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newsline application provided to all Arkansans. Counseling labs that are school based locations are 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.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment indicated that assistive technology and access to affordable transportation are the top most significant barriers to employment. The third most critical barrier is the need for direct job placement assistance. The DSB technology lab is implementing changes to provide assistive technology recommendations at a faster turn-around rate; the lab is scheduling appointments for assistive technology evaluations within seven days of receipt of requests. Evaluations are being provided within five days of the assessment. Transportation continues to be a significant need. DSB is continually searching for affordable vehicular transportation services for clients and arranges for payment of these services when appropriate to the plan and goal. DSB has identified drivers and vetted those drivers through background checks and screenings in order to qualify them to drive for clients. DSB will continue these efforts to offer transportation services throughout the State. Lastly, clients have asked for direct job placement assistance. DSB has worked with providers in neighboring states and negotiated agreements for these providers to expand into Arkansas to provide direct job placement assistance. DSB counselors have been provided continuing education training on providing direct job placement assistance to clients. DSB has also partnered with Workforce Services to locate current job openings in order to meet with employers and negotiate direct placements for participants. 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.

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.

   In FFY 2017, DSB achieved 306 successful employment outcomes, which was up from 304 in FFY 2016.

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

   Strategy: VR Counselors will make job contacts with employers. Performance Measures:
Goal Met/Extended: DSB Counselors continue to make two face to face contacts with employers each month. Staff attends Business Expos with Chamber of Commerce and exhibit at other events. DSB coordinates and shares information with ARS Business Relations staff. The new Business Relations Coordinator will build on this relationship with ARS and Workforce Services and coordinate materials for employers.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Performance Measures: • All self-employment proposals will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Unit Manager, the Field Services Administrator, and the VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. • In addition to the goal and steps of self-employment being on the IPE, the participant must complete a written business plan with the DSB business-ownership team described above. • A brochure will be developed to provide interested participants with information about DSB’s small business self-employment program. • Staff will receive training in Operation Jumpstart, a hands-on, microenterprise development program designed to help entrepreneurs test the feasibility of their business ideas and plan to launch new ventures. DSB’s Operation Jumpstart’s mission is to help participants who have expressed an interest in starting their own business, explore the possibility, develop a business plan, and start their own business. In doing so we help them become economically independent and be an active part of their communities. Goal Met/Extended: This process was followed and business plans were submitted and approved. However, the Small Business Program was restructured and moved to the Field Services unit. As a result, plans for a small business brochure are being revised. Instead of doing an Operation Jumpstart training in 2015, it was decided to do one-on-one assistance to participants as needed using the Small Business Developer.

2 Year Update - The Field Services Unit has procedures in place to review all business plans for approval. Counselors provide assistance and resources to participants as needed to prepare business plans. DSB has utilized partnership with Small Business Administration and their website trainings to assist participants with developing their business plans. Counselors assist participants as they start up the business operation with resources. The small business’s are monitored and evaluated.

Strategy: Based upon participant response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment. Job Clubs also encourage peer mentoring. Performance Measure: Job Clubs will be held at least once a month at the DSB Tech Lab and field offices. Goal Met: Job Clubs are being conducted as planned.

2 Year Update - Job Clubs continue to be held at least monthly at the DSB Tech Lab and in the Field Offices across the state.

Performance Measure: DSB will refer 100% of eligible Older Blind individuals to VR. Goal Met: All Older Blind individuals interested in employment are referred to VR.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers and will encourage peer mentoring. Performance Measures: • Each counselor who has been in his/her position for at least a year will nominate one individual from his/her caseload as a candidate for state Consumer of the Year and encourage the individual to serve as a peer mentor to other people who are blind or severely visually impaired. • DSB will award Consumer of the Year
candidates and their employers with trophies/plaques and related publicity. Goal Met: Counselors are nominating outstanding Consumers of the Year, and the consumers and their employers are being recognized with trophies/plaques and publicity.

2 Year Update - Counselors nominated and honored 19 participants as local COY’s. The Consumer of the Year for 2017 was selected from Fort Smith, Arkansas. She and her employer were honored at a ceremony in December 2017.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. Performance Measures: • DSB will acquire specialized training to develop the skills and credentials of Rehabilitation Teachers. • DSB will continue to assign new Rehabilitation Teachers to assistive technology training as vacant positions are filled, so that staff can provide basic technology support to participants in their respective geographic areas statewide. Supervisors will schedule veteran RTs for remedial training as a formal part of their professional development plan. • DSB will continue 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 staff will 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. Goal Met: DSB provided new Rehabilitation Teachers with assistive technology training and continued to train Workforce Services staffs. VR Counselors met participants at accessible kiosks to assist them in their job searches.

2 year Update: DSB currently has 17 kiosks in the local Workforce Services offices. The kiosks assist clients with development of job searches and other career related skills.

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. Goal Met: Novice counselors were given the opportunity to attend the ARA annual conference and to apply for stipends to attend the conferences of professional organizations.

2 Year Update - DSB continues to provide staff development opportunities for all staff according to their professional development plan. They are given the opportunity to participate in specialized training, annual conferences with ARA and other professional organizations.

Strategy: DSB will contract with local providers to secure select VR services to capitalize on the established relationships of such contractors with local employers, to secure appropriate employment for DSB clients in geographic proximity to their homes. Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met. Goal Met: Instead of contracting with employment providers, DSB decided to pay private, local job placement specialists on a fee-for-service basis.

2 Year Update - DSB continues to pay private, local job placement specialist on a fee for service basis. DSB currently has increased their job placement vendors and are working with them to secure appropriate employment for DSB clients within their community.
Strategy: DSB will establish multi-layered support systems for clients by developing performance based contracts with Faith-Based Organizations (FBO’s) and other providers across the state, as an extension of their missions, to provide depth to volunteer employment-related transportation and other services in rural areas of the state. Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met. Goal Met: Deliverables were met by CIL’s who participated in the RFQ and contracted with DSB, but some CIL’s chose not to participate. No responses were received from FBO’s.

2 Year Update - DSB has several contracts with several Faith Based Organizations (Mainstream, Arkansas Independent Living, Sources and DRA/ Spa Area Independent Living) to provide services in the rural area of the state. Our Counselors have participated in Health Fairs in the Delta Region of the state.

Strategy: DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab on selected college campuses to inform Transition Partner organizations of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them. Performance Measure: An information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab will be established on at least one college campus. Goal Met: The Business and Technology Unit demonstrated technology to college and high school students on a college campus.

2 Year Update: DSB continues to utilize the software tutorials purchased from Digital Apex, but are also further developing our training curriculum to include newer technologies acquired by the DSB tech lab. These include: tutorials for the Mac and i-devices, as well as various newer web browsers and tools used both by colleges and employers. The agency constantly work to write new and/or adapt existing tutorials and training modules in order to better facilitate a broader training spectrum that encompasses a wide range of skill sets and client goals.

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab. Performance Measure: DSB will re-design the technology needs assessment and database process for the DSB central Tech Lab to better align it with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. This is a specific initiative of the DSB Leadership Training Team, in partnership with the Oklahoma Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS) leadership training project. Goal Met: A survey about Tech Lab services was received by participants and DSB staff. The response rate was very low, but the WINGS project itself led to the purchase of an instructional library for use when teaching in the Tech Lab. This library includes tutorials for MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook for use with JAWS, MAGic, Window-eyes, and Internet Explorer. The tutorials are updated on a regular basis and additional instructional materials for other software and equipment is added as needed or available.

2 Year Update - Staff has provided training on the AWARE data management system at Field Services’ Trainings and area workshops. Adjustments are made to AWARE as needed to meet the requirements of WIOA.

Strategy: DSB will convert its client data MIS system to a web-based environment. Performance Measures: • Counselors will be able to enter client data and gather signatures during local visits, which will streamline the flow of services. • The new system will facilitate the production of statistical reports. Goal Met: DSB purchased the AWARE data management system and all staff are now proficient in its use. 2 Year Update - Quality Assurance Coordinator routinely provides
training on the AWARE data management system at Field Services’ Trainings and area workshops. Adjustments are made to AWARE as needed to meet the requirements of WIOA.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in a variety of situations to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area.

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. • Participants 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 in Job Club will be encouraged to mentor each other in their searches for employment and development of job readiness skills. Goal Met: Peer mentoring is occurring as planned.

2 Year Update: Peer mentoring is occurring as planned

Goal 2: DSB will increase its services to transition students.

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.

Goal Met: Parent Summits were held in Harrison and West Memphis in for transition students and their families from throughout the state. Transition partners were invited to attend and some were asked to make presentations. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

2 Year Update - Parent Summits continue to be held across the state to include a statewide summit in Little Rock. DSB conducted a 3 week Jump Start Summer Program to expose the students to the world or work and help them with transitioning from high school to employment. Twenty (20) participants were served annually.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measure: The Transition Coordinator will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information. Goal Met: The Transition Coordinator reviewed the database and insured it was being maintained.

2 Year Update - DSB has 7 Pre-ETS Counselors working with the youth 16 to graduation. Each counselor maintains their own caseload. Reports are generated from the AWARE database to assist the Field Services Administrator, Transition Coordinator and counselors maintain the cases.

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure 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 insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE. Goal Met: Case reviews showed no students were graduating without current IPE’s.

2 Year Update - DSB has 7 Pre-ETS Counselors working with the youth 16 to graduation. Each counselor maintains their own caseload. Reports are generated from the AWARE database to
assist the Field Services Administrator, Transition Coordinator and counselors maintain the
cases.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits around the state 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: In FY 2015, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to Parent Summits with VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, to provide information about students’ rights and accommodations. Goal Met: Parent Summits were held in West Memphis and Harrison for transition students and their families from throughout the state. ESVI was included on the agenda. The information provided included IEP’s, but topics extended beyond high school and into college services. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

2 Year Update - The Agenda for the conducted Parent Summits included information on IEP’s, post-secondary education and additional resources.

Strategy: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will make face-to-face visits to each school counselor assigned to students who are blind or visually impaired in their territories. Performance Measure: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will have from the beginning of the school year to December 1, to complete the face-to-face visits to school counselors described above. Goal Met: VR Counselors made face-to-face contacts within required timeframes.

2 Year Update - All DSB counselors made face to face contacts/visits with assigned school counselors during the required time frame each year.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments 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, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. Performance Measure: All transition students will be referred to Rehabilitation Teachers for assessment of daily living skills and needed instruction. Goal Met: Transition students are referred for assessments in accordance with policy and the State Plan.

Update - All Pre-ETS students are referred for assessment of daily living skills and needed instruction in accordance with policy and the State Plan.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to public schools. Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to contacts in public schools and have improved communication and strengthened relationships.

2 Year Update - DSB’s Pre-ETS counselors send mail-outs and emails to their contacts in the public schools to improve communication and strengthen relationships. Staff also held Outreach Workshops within the schools with teachers, staff, parents, and students to improve communication and strengthen relationships.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with ESVI. Performance Measures: • DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator 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 young participants to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ESVI to DSB. Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and have improved communication and strengthened relationships. The Transition Coordinator maintains contact with ESVI at a state level.

Year Update - DSB staff have coordinated referrals with ESVI staff. Staff attended and helped plan the AER conference. They also serve on the AER Board. Staff attended a Transition Conference October 2017 with these partners.

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 use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor will man at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory. Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each territory.

2 Year Update - VR Counselors continue to meet or exceed this goal in each area of the state. School Outreach workshops were held at Bald Knob and Fort Smith High Schools. Transition Fairs were held in Jefferson County. Other events include Chamber of Commerce, health fairs, and employment fairs.

Strategy: DSB will contract with CIL’s to reach out to faith-based organizations and inform them of DSB services. Performance Measure: CIL’s will submit to DSB copies of minutes of meetings with faith-based groups, reports on trainings, and monthly reports, including the number of faith-based referrals. Goal Met: DSB staff monitoring the contract determined that CIL’s submitted program and financial documentation as required by the RFQ.

2 Year Update - DSB staff continue to monitor the contract and the CIL’s submitted all required program and financial documentation.

Strategy: DSB will increase its services to minorities. Performance Measures: DSB will make at least one minority outreach effort to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of its geographic areas in FY 2015. Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each area.

2 Year Update - VR Counselors continue to meet or exceed this goal in each area.

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 continue to send at least five supervisors/administrators to these conferences and will make presentations as requested. Goal Met: DSB exceeded the number of supervisors and administrators that were to be sent to conferences of blindness consumer groups. Opportunities to attend these conferences were extended to direct service staff, and some staff chose to participate.

2 Year Update - DSB staff attended the state National Federation of the Blind, and Arkansas Council for the Blind conferences, Counselors attended the national conferences also. DSB staff presented at the ASBVI Alumni Association. DSB did a presentation at a SELL vendor conference.
Evaluation of FY 2015 SE Goals:

Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2015 SE Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015:

Goal 1: Increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (LFB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB participants. Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB participants in supported employment during FY 2015. Goal Met: DSB referred 100% of its SE participants to WSB and LFB in 2015. DSB also established a methodology for each VR Counselor to submit two SE referrals to WSB, so that 26 participants would be referred each year forward of 2015.

2 Year Update - DSB added several new SE providers to include; S.W. Chance, Ed Davis, and TEEM. A new SE Vendor Application was also developed.

Strategy: DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Arkansas chapter of APSE: Advancing Employment, Connecting People, to expand the number of SE providers. Performance Measure: At least two new potential SE providers will be identified and contacted. Goal Met: Career Links and Friendship Community Care became new SE providers for DSB.

2 Year Update - DSB continues to encourage participants’ family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

Strategy: DSB will encourage participants’ family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers. Performance Measure: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and participant. Goal Met: Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014. The trainings continued into 2015.

2 Year Update - DSB continues to encourage participants, family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

Strategy: DSB will continue to encourage CRPs to become Employment Networks (ENs). Performance Measure: A meeting will have taken place with at least one CRP to discuss the possibility of its becoming an EN. Goal Met: DSB discussed the possibility of becoming EN’s with WSB and LFB.

2 Year Update — World Services for the Blind is working to become an Employment Network.

Goal 2: Increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and participant. Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE participants. Goal Met: DSB collaborated with TACE, WSB and LFB to develop the training for natural supports. The first training was held in March 2014 and continued into 2015.
2 Year Update: DSB added several new SE providers to include; S.W. Chance, Ed Davis, and TEEM. A new SE Vendor Application was also developed.

Strategy: Orient DSB staff to new program design. Performance Measures: At least one staff training on SE program design will be conducted in FY 2015. Goal Met: Staff received training on the new program design at the annual field service meeting. DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years in order to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency in order to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

2 Year Update: Training is provided as needed to educate staff regarding any updates on SE program services.

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

DSB achieved 306 successful employment outcomes in FFY 2017, an increase from 304 in 2016. DSB has increased the number of individuals who receive Supported Employment (SE). In FFY 2016, 24 individuals received services, with 1 successful closure. In FFY 2017, 36 individuals received supported employment services, 1 closed successfully and 27 continue to receive services.

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 worked with World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Career Links, and Friendship Community Care to provide services in Arkansas. The goal is for DSB to assist with growing their capacity to offer services to the maximum extent allowable. However, lack of dedicated staff to devote to this endeavor has impeded the training available to CRPs to grow their capacity for this service. The Lighthouse for the Blind was a partner agency in 2014 in the provisions of Supported Employment services; however, a change of ownership to the National Industries for the Blind ended the availability of that resource to those we support.

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 achieved 306 successful employment outcomes in FFY 2017, an increase from 304 in 2016. DSB has increased the number of individuals who receive Supported Employment (SE). In FFY 2016, 24 individuals received services, with 1 successful closure. In FFY 2017, 36 individuals received supported employment services, 1 closed successfully and 27 continue to receive services.

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 worked with World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Career Links, and Friendship Community Care to provide services in Arkansas. The goal is for DSB to assist with growing their capacity to offer services
to the maximum extent allowable. However, lack of dedicated staff to devote to this endeavor has impeded the training available to CRPs to grow their capacity for this service. In regards to supported employment (SE), DSB has seen no significant increase in the number of SE outcomes. There is lack of Community Rehabilitation Programs with the capacity to support the blind and visually impaired in the State. In the last three years only one individual has exited the program still maintains employment. In FFY 2013, services were provided to 8 individuals, none were closed successfully. In FFY 2014, 6 individuals were receiving services in supported employment, 0 have successfully achieved sustained employment. In 2015, 10 individuals entered supported employment and one has sustained employment successfully.

DSB has attempted a number of strategies to increase the success of the supported employment program in the last 4 years. An agreement was entered into with WSB and the Lighthouse for the Blind to offer supports training to the families, blindness skills trainings, and the place and train model of supported employment, payable using the milestone payment system. DSB has increased providers.

Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2015 SE Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2014 — September 30, 2015:

Goal 1: Increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (LFB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB participants.

2 Year Update - DSB added several new SE providers to include; S.W. Chance, Ed Davis, and TEEM. A new SE Vendor Application was also developed.

Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB participants in supported employment during FY 2015. Goal Met: DSB referred 100% of its SE participants to WSB and LFB in 2015.

DSB also established a methodology for each VR Counselor to submit two SE referrals to WSB, so that 26 participants would be referred each year forward of 2015.

2 Year Update: DSB continues to refer clients to WSB and other providers to ensure the appropriate services are available to SE clients.

Strategy: DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Arkansas chapter of APSE: Advancing Employment, Connecting People, to expand the number of SE providers. Performance Measure: At least two new potential SE providers will be identified and contacted. Goal Met: Career Links and Friendship Community Care became new SE providers for DSB.

2 Year Update - DSB added several new SE providers to include; S.W. Chance, Ed Davis, and TEEM. A new SE Vendor Application was also developed.

Strategy: DSB will encourage participants’ family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers. Performance Measure: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and participant. Goal Met:
Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014. The trainings continued into 2015.

2 Year Update — DSB continues to encourage participants’ family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

Strategy: DSB will continue to encourage CRPs to become Employment Networks (ENs).
Performance Measure: A meeting will have taken place with at least one CRP to discuss the possibility of its becoming an EN. Goal Met: DSB discussed the possibility of becoming EN’s with WSB and LFB.

2 Year Update — World Services for the Blind is working to become an Employment Network.

Goal 2: Increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and participant. Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE participants. Goal Met: DSB collaborated with TACE, WSB and LFB to develop the training for natural supports. The first training was held in March 2014 and continued into 2015.

2 Year Update: DSB continues to provide training as needed to develop SE providers.

Strategy: Orient DSB staff to new program design. Performance Measures: At least one staff training on SE program design will be conducted in FY 2015. Goal Met: Staff received training on the new program design at the annual field service meeting.

2 Year Update: Training is provided to staff as needed to educate staff regarding any updates on SE program services.

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

Goals were met.

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

DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, in concert with RSA and DSB’s Independent Commission in order to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency in order to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

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

Funds for innovation and expansion were used to expand the services of Newsline, which can now be accessed through more methods, including live streaming.

**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. DSB uses vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired. Services include: an individual evaluation of rehabilitation potential via supported employment, provision of job development services (including job analysis and appropriate accommodations), intensive on—the—job training and job coaching, and provision or coordination of support services such as counseling or transportation. Services are provided within federal guidelines until the employment is secure and appropriate extended services are in place.

Once the individual has maintained stability on the job for an appropriate period of time, the funding for and provision of extended services transitions to an extended services provider. The rehabilitation counselor continues to track the individual’s progress and job stability during the transition period. If the individual maintains stabilization for 90 days or more after transition to extended services, the case is closed successfully. If needed, post—employment services may be provided at any time after closure.

In regards to supported employment (SE), DSB has gradually increased the number of individuals who receive this service by increasing the number of Community Rehabilitation Programs in the State that offer Supported Employment to the Blind and Visually Impaired. In FFY 2011, DSB served 6 individuals in SE services. One individual was a successful employment outcome. FFY 2012, services were provided to 8 individuals, none were closed successfully. In FFY 2014, 20 individuals were receiving services in supported employment, 4 have successfully achieved sustained employment. In FFY 2015 we gained the full support of World Services for the Blind as a partner in each milestone of the supported employment service, which includes supports and training for the care givers of the individuals receiving services.

DSB had 35 clients receiving services at WSB in FFY 2016 towards a Supported Employment goal of that 10 have been identified as youth with the most significant disabilities (blind or low vision). In FFY 2017 DSB had 36 individuals receiving supported employment services, with 1 successful closure and 27 individuals continuing to receive services.

There are not a sufficient number of service providers who deliver supported employment in the state on a fee for service basis. DSB continues to work towards a Memorandum of Agreement for the provision of extended services with the Medical and Developmental Disabilities Divisions of the Department of Human Services to provide financial supports in on—going extended services to many consumers who are both intellectually disabled and legally blind. All work programs will be in integrated settings paying the minimum wage.

2. The timing of transition to extended services.

Transition to extended services is at least 90 days after successful placement, no later than 18 months.
Certifications

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate  Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind

Name of designated State agency  Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind

Full Name of Authorized Representative Cassondra Williams-Stokes

Title of Authorized Representative:  DSB Director

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.**  Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the designated State agency listed above agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;  Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan*, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;**  Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;  Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.  Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.  Yes

7. The Authorized Representative listed above has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;  Yes
8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; **Yes**

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. **Yes**

**Footnotes**

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**Certification 1 Footnotes**

* Public Law 113-128.

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

**Certification 2 Footnotes**

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

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

**Certification 3 Footnotes**

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

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

**Additional Comments on the Certifications from the State**

**Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation**

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a
Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant’s Organization
Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind

Full Name of Authorized Representative: Cassondra Williams-Stokes

Title of Authorized Representative: DSB Director

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Supported Employment

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of
an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant’s Organization
Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind

Full Name of Authorized Representative: Cassondra Williams-Stokes
Title of Authorized Representative: DSB Director

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

Assurances

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of
the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A) is an independent State commission

c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.

d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).

e. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds  

f. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs:  

No
g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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

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

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:

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

a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual’s eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above

d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.
g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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

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

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

   i. has developed and will implement,
      A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
      B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
   ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).

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

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

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

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

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State’s allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.
b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

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

b. The designated State agency assures that:

i. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act

ii. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State