

# South Dakota PYs 2020-2023 - Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Blind)

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# Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

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

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

## a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

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

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

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Board), the state rehabilitation council for the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI or Division), is in place to advise the Division in accordance with Title IV, Section 105 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Board advises the Division in the development of the state plan, the Board annual report, review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other activities including review of policies that impact the expenditure of federal and state funds and the coordination and planning for service delivery to individuals involved in the SBVI vocational rehabilitation program.

The Board represents South Dakota citizens who are blind or visually impaired who can benefit from vocational rehabilitation and independent living services within the state. The Board's mission statement reflects these priorities: "The mission of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is to promote independence, employment and full inclusion for all citizens who are blind or visually impaired." All Board agendas are developed by the Board's Executive Committee with the Division Director. Policies are provided to Board members in draft format to offer the opportunity for input prior to finalization. No recommendations by the Board of SBVI were rejected by the Division during the plan period.

The Board of SBVI meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public and held in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting law, SDCL, 1-25-1. All meetings are publicized via the state's news website, through newsletters, on the SBVI web site and the State of South Dakota Board Portal.

Annual Report to the Governor and RSA Commissioner: The Board directed staff to draft and complete annual reports for 2018 and 2019. The reports were approved by the full Board prior to submission to the Governor and RSA Commissioner.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Due to reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act through implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), South Dakota Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) and the Board of SBVI addressed priorities addressed in the WIOA at quarterly Board meetings. Topics included: the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) and revision of goals and strategies based on the CSNA, strategic planning with the Department of Labor and Regulation, services for minorities and collaboration with employers.

The Board Strategic Plan and Policy Committee met via conference call to review and discuss the revised goals and strategies that were developed by the full Board based on the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Their recommendations were shared with full Board for approval prior to submission.

Modifications to the plan were distributed to all board members for further review and comments. Public forums and disability summits are planned to share information and obtain input on services and needs of citizens with vision loss. Information obtained through public input, coordination with other entities including labor, education and consumer organizations were used to re-evaluate goals and strategies in the state plan. The Board of SBVI recommends sites and formats for the public forums.

The Division agreed with the Board's recommendations related to public meetings including that meetings be held in Rapid City (in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind State Convention) and a videoconference meeting with multiple sites. Public forums are held annually during the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota convention and semi-annually during the South Dakota Association of the Blind convention. The practice of conducting public meetings in conjunction with other events that bring together people who are blind or visually impaired has worked well. The Division will continue to seek opportunities for this collaboration in the future.

Two video conferences were held to gather input on the WIOA Unified State Plan for the 2020 submission. The first video conference was held on February 3, 2020, with SBVI stakeholders as a result of the Board of SBVI recommending this format. The video conference was held with sites in Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City, and Sioux Falls, as well as a toll-free phone-in option. There were 29 participants who attended the public forum. Discussion was centered around the SBVI goals and strategies. Recommendations received included changing language in one strategy from "obtain employment" to "obtain or maintain employment". The Division incorporated this recommendation in the state plan for submission. Other topics discussed did not relate directly to the state plan and included orientation and mobility and assistive technology services.

The second video conference was held on February 6, 2020, with all core partners participating in the public forum. The video conference was held with sites in Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Huron, Spearfish, Watertown, Brookings, Yankton, and Mitchell, as well as a toll-free call-in feature. There were 45 participants who attended the forum, primarily core partner agency staff. The strategic workforce vision, as well as goals and strategies for the respective core programs were shared with participants for purpose of discussion. Comments were received from Title II providers and were addressed by the appropriate core partner representatives. Members of the Board of SBVI participated in both video conferences.

Board Support for Individuals/Organizations: The Board of SBVI sponsors events that promote employment of citizens with disabilities in conjunction with organizations of the blind and other organizations. The Division of SBVI developed procedures for Board sponsorship based on input from the Board of SBVI.

Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities: The annual Governor's Awards event is held to recognize individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This annual event is a joint effort of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services.

The Division supported the Board's recommendation to assist with the Governor's Awards, and supported attendance by Board members. The Board has representatives who assist with making the award selections along with a committee of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Board of SBVI

Public Relations committee drafted nominations to be submitted for recognition. Two nominees who were members of the Board of SBVI were selected for recognition in 2017. Koni Sims, Board Vice Chair received the Outstanding Citizen with a Disability award and Tami Francis received the Outstanding Employee with a Disability. Catherine Greseth, Board Chair received the Outstanding Citizen with a Disability award in 2018. No nominations were submitted by the Board in 2019.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) activities are planned in communities across South Dakota every year by the Divisions of SBVI and Rehabilitation Services with input from the respective boards. Local committees of agency staff and stakeholders meet to plan activities across the state during the month of October to raise awareness of the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In addition to a financial contribution towards the budget for the events, members of the Board of SBVI partner with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation to review and approving proposals for local NDEAM events.

The Division endorsed the Board's involvement in planning and supporting NDEAM activities in 2018 and 2019.

White Cane Awareness Day: The Board voted unanimously to support a white cane education activity in Sioux Falls in FFY 2018 and 2019. A march and presentations by law enforcement and citizens who were blind resulted in public awareness for those in attendance as well as those who experienced the event through extensive news coverage on local television stations.

The Division supported the Boards sponsorship of the White Cane Day activities by assisting with costs for digital billboards which promote white cane safety awareness.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF): The YLF is held annually with 40 + students in attendance each year. Several participants who are blind are supported by SBVI. YLF makes a significant impact in the students' lives through interaction with peer mentors and activities that teach self-advocacy skills.

The Division agreed with the Board's recommendation to support the annual Youth Leadership Forum for participation of transition age students with vision loss.

VR Program- Consumer Satisfaction: The survey was conducted in FFY 2018 and 2019. Results of the survey were reported to the Board of SBVI and included in the Board's annual report. The Board approved using the SBVI Client Satisfaction Questionnaire-8 (CSQ-8) survey to obtain input. The survey consists of eight core questions and an additional seven questions that were developed with input from the Board of SBVI. A summary of survey results is included in the reports of progress section of the state plan.

Board Representation at Consumer Organization Conventions: The Board of SBVI has made the commitment to support the attendance of clients and representatives of the Board each year at state conventions of consumer organizations including National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota and South Dakota Association of the Blind.

The Division supported the Board's recommendation for Board member representation at consumer organization conventions. The Division also supported the recommendation that stipends be provided to first time attendees at the conventions. Public forums are held in conjunction with consumer organization conventions when possible.

Transition services for youth who are blind or visually impaired: The Board of SBVI supported development of a brochure to target youth, educators and family members about vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services. The brochure is shared annually with all school districts in South Dakota in addition to being provided to parents, organizations and other entities.

Transition Week at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) is an annual summer youth program for high school students with vision loss from around South Dakota. The objective is to build skills and confidence through work and community involvement. During the summers of 2018 and

2019 high school students attended to learn about employment and post-secondary options. Board members are invited to serve as mentors to the students by participating in activities and presenting.

The Board of SBVI Annual Report: SBVI staff teamed up with the Board of SBVI to complete and submit the Board's annual report on the status of SBVI programs in 2018 and 2019. The board has been instrumental in designing an annual report that is accessible and that provides valuable information to readers concerning SBVI programs and Board activities.

The Board annual report was completed and submitted within timelines mandated by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Division incorporated all of the Board's recommendations into the final reports.

Board Participation in Comprehensive System of Personnel Development: Results from training needs assessments and evaluations are shared with members of the Board and their input is sought on activities to address the needs identified. Board members are invited to participate in conferences and training activities sponsored by the Division.

Public Access to Meetings and Materials: The State of South Dakota has codified law to address open meeting requirements including that the meetings be open to the public and materials be available to the public. All SBVI Board meetings are held in locations accessible to individuals with disabilities and sign language interpreters or other accommodations are available upon request. Meetings are announced through the State of South Dakota news system for state government. In addition, meeting dates and locations are announced in newsletters, on the SBVI website and agendas are posted at SBVI offices. Agendas, minutes and Board membership, the Board annual report and other information are available through the State of South Dakota Board and Commission Portal. The goal of the portal is to make the boards and commissions more open and transparent. All information is provided in the alternative formats.

## **2. The designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and**

The Division of SBVI accepted all input and recommendations from the Board of SBVI.

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

No input or recommendations were rejected.

### **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;**

Counselors do provide services in all areas of the state. RSA suggested the request for waiver of statewideness specifically since some school districts do not participate in Project Skills. The South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) provides work experiences for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) transition age students through Project Skills in conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Project Skills is a cooperative arrangement with the local school

districts and the state VR agencies. SBVI makes this program available to all schools including 20 Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education schools and 151 public school districts. Approximately 143 South Dakota's public and Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education schools are currently participating in the program. The program is available to the remaining school districts, but they have chosen not to complete a contract with the South Dakota VR agencies. The Rehabilitation Services Administration suggested that SBVI submit a waiver of statewideness for the Project Skills Program because all school districts do not participate.

**Services Provided:** Many students with significant disabilities don't have the opportunity to participate in gainful employment while in high school. Although willing, most employers cannot afford to provide the training and supports students frequently require on their first job. Project Skills assists students to build their work history while helping them to move into different and better jobs as they mature and are ready to take on new challenges. This program is a cooperative arrangement between the State VR Agencies and the local school systems. SBVI pays the wages, workers compensation, and FICA; the schools provide the job development, job coaching, and follow-along services for students at the job site.

**Written Assurances:** Each school enters into an agreement with SBVI for Project Skills. This agreement requires the school district to provide written assurance that they will use non-federal funds for their share of the Project Skills program as match for the federal funds allocated by SBVI, including funds contributed to the school by a private agency, organization, or individual. The Project Skills program is only available for students who are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation.

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

All services are provided under an approved Individualized Plan for Employment and authorized by the VR Counselor prior to being put into effect.

## **3. Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.**

SBVI assures that requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan apply to the services approved under the waiver. Services provided under the waiver are included in the Individual Plan for Employment and authorized by the eligible individual's vocational rehabilitation counselor.

## **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 Divisions of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) and Rehabilitation Services (DRS) have a strong working relationship with the Workforce System in South Dakota. The cooperation between our agencies is through formal written agreements and informal arrangements.

Formal Memorandum of Understanding with One Stop Partners: The Divisions of SBVI and DRS have a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Dakota Department of Labor. This agreement addresses: Provision of comprehensive services designed to assist unemployed citizens of the State of South Dakota to obtain gainful employment; Support for underemployed citizens of the state to prepare for new and more rewarding careers; Providing the youth of South Dakota with a positive introduction into the world of work and subsequent follow-up and guidance to youth once they enter the workforce; Universal access to all customers, including those with special needs or barriers to employment; Customer choice in the way services are accessed, and in choosing services, based on individual interests and need; Integrated services through a planning process at the state and local levels, coordination of activities and services for customers, and sharing information and client data; and being fully aware of the role each partner has within the system and to understand the services each partner provides.

The Divisions of SBVI and DRS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation on 3/26/2018. This agreement addresses data sharing between agencies for common performance reporting.

Federal, State and Local Agencies and Programs: Other 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 consist of:

Project Skills: SBVI, in conjunction with DRS has cooperative agreements with local school districts throughout South Dakota for the provision of transition services. The Project Skills program provides paid work-based experiences in student's career interest areas to help them prepare for adulthood and the world of work.

Project SEARCH: Is an international trademarked and copyrighted program model, which focuses solely on employment for Project SEARCH interns. In conjunction with DRS, SBVI has cooperative agreements with local Project Search sites in Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City, Sturgis and Sioux Falls locations. Cooperative agreements lay out each party's responsibility for the Project Search activities provided to students with disabilities, including students who are blind or visually impaired.

School for the Blind and Visually Impaired: SBVI has an agreement in place with the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired for a Transition Specialist. This position serves as a liaison between the educational and vocational rehabilitation systems. Services include assisting with the development of transition plans, coordination of transition services for students with vision loss, technical assistance and consultation and training to youth who are blind or visually impaired.

Interagency cooperation with, and utilization of the services and facilities of the Federal, State, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture: These agreements typically are associated with AgrAbility Programs and South Dakota does not have an AgrAbility Program. The State VR Agencies do not have any agreements under the Secretary for Rural Development of the US Department of Agricultural.

The Division of SBVI has agreements in place with federal facilities for vendors who operate under the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). In addition, there is an agreement in place with the South Dakota Department of Transportation for proceeds from interstate vending in South Dakota to be used to support the BEP.

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

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has an agreement in place with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative/Dakota Link for the implementation of assistive technology services. Services are provided on a fee for service basis; assistive technology services and devices are consistently one of the top case service expenditures for SBVI.



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

These agreements typically are associated with AgrAbility Programs and South Dakota does not have an AgrAbility Program. The State VR Agencies do not have any agreements under the Secretary for Rural Development of the US Department of Agriculture.

### 4. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has no agreements with non-educational agencies to serve out-of-school youth.

### 5. State use contracting programs.

The State of South Dakota does not have a "State Use Law".

## d. Coordination with Education Officials

Describe:

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

Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) requires vocational rehabilitation counselors to visit each school district in their territory at least annually. Counselors and/or the Transition Specialist are required to attend IEP meetings to address transition services for students with vision loss. Once eligibility is determined, individualized plans for employment are developed as soon as students can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services. In conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, SBVI has an agreement with the Office of Special Education to fund the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP). The TSLP provides technical assistance and training to students, parents, local education agencies and adult service agencies to assist with transition activities that result in a successful transition from education to postsecondary opportunities and employment. The TSLP manages the following transition activities:

- **Project Skills:** Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student's work history, references and assists them with experiencing different career fields to assist them with making decisions on future employment goals.

- **Project Search:** Project Search is a national model based on partnering with large employers, local school districts and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. South Dakota currently has five Project Search sites in Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City, Sturgis and Sioux Falls.
- **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF):** YLF is a unique career and leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors to learn more about self-advocacy skills and disability awareness. Students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this annual five-day event.
- **Catch the Wave:** Catch the Wave is a one-day seminar designed specifically for high school students who have a disability and are considering post-secondary education (either college or technical institutes). Students learn about preparing for postsecondary life including securing appropriate accommodations and developing self-advocacy and communication skills.
- **Let's Talk About Work:** A one-day conference designed for high school students with a disability to learn what it takes to be a successful employee. Students are given the opportunity to meet local employers to discuss soft skills needed for jobs.
- **Regional Transition Forums:** These forums are informal and interactive meetings for providers of services, transition-age students with disabilities, as well as family members to explore options for transition services opportunities.
- **Post-Secondary Disability Coordinators Forum:** This forum is held annually for Disability Coordinators from South Dakota Post-Secondary programs. The forums help to educate about the transition process from high school to post-secondary for students with disabilities, including the role of vocational rehabilitation and pre-employment transition services.
- **Summer Institute:** The Summer Institute is a statewide training opportunity for Special Education teachers who are assisting students in the transition process. It is held for one week in the summer and offers training in areas of IDEA, introducing self-determination curriculum and other assessment materials, and IEP planning. Teachers receive graduate credit for the class and gain knowledge from Disability Services Coordinators from post-secondary schools, vocational rehabilitation staff, Transition Liaisons, community mental health agencies and independent living services staff.

**Other Activities Include:**

- **Cooperative Agreement with the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired:** This agreement supports a Transition Specialist who provides pre-employment transition services to students with vision loss on a statewide basis. This position serves as the bridge between education and adult services by working with students in public schools and at the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired as well as assisting vocational rehabilitation counselors with the provision of pre-employment transition services.

- Summer Programs for Students with Vision Loss: SBVI hosts an annual Transition Week at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. Students participate in job exploration and self-advocacy activities that help build skills and confidence as they prepare for post-secondary or employment opportunities.

#### Pre-Employment Transition Services:

SBVI networks with the Office of Special Education and other agencies to assure pre-employment transition services are available throughout the state. A brochure targeting students with vision loss has been developed and distributed to school guidance counselors, students and parents.

Development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before leaving school: SBVI has implemented policies and procedures to assure that students with disabilities access the vocational rehabilitation program and develop their IPE before they complete high school. This helps prepare students with vision loss to access a variety of services to address barriers caused by vision loss. SBVI VR Counselors contact school counselors and 504 coordinators on a regular basis to identify and meet with students who can benefit from services.

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired works cooperatively with local school districts, the South Dakota Department of Education, the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Department of Labor and Regulation and parents and students to provide vocational rehabilitation services to youth with vision loss and students as they transition from school to the adult world. SBVI is committed to providing quality transition services to youth with vision loss that facilitate movement from school to post-secondary education and/or successful employment. A seamless system with involvement of workforce partners and education is integral to provision of quality, individualized services.

## 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;

South Dakota's human service agencies and education system have forged a strong coalition to implement a number of pre-employment transition activities and transition services to prepare students with disabilities for post school activities that lead to successful employment outcomes. The South Dakota Cooperative Agreement Concerning Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities was revised in July 2017. The following South Dakota entities are included in the agreement: Office of Special Education, Division of Workforce and Career Preparation, Division of Behavioral Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Labor and Regulation and the Division of Child Protection Services.

The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities including: Consultation and technical assistance for planning transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocation rehabilitation services; transition planning by personnel of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and school district personnel; roles and responsibilities of each agency including state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; financial responsibilities; and procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

The agreement presents a conceptual framework and common policy for addressing interagency transition planning at the local level, ensuring that youth with disabilities have access to the services and resources needed to enter adult life (and employment) successfully. Cooperating agencies benefit from maximum coordination of services, more efficient utilization of agency resources, increased service options, and improved interagency communication.

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI) Cooperative Agreement: This agreement was implemented to coordinate efforts to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired receive effective, seamless services as they make the transition from school to adult life and employment. The agreement specifies roles and responsibilities including: Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services; The role for transition planning by personnel of SBVI and SDSBVI and local school districts that facilitate the development and completion of individualized education programs and individual plans for employment; Roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of each agency and determination of state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and procedures for outreach to students who are blind or visually impaired who need transition services. The cooperative agreement stipulates that SBVI and the SDSBVI will provide a full-time staff person who is committed to working with students who are blind or visually impaired on a statewide basis. This staff person provides technical assistance to educational agencies as the students move from school settings to postsecondary or other settings.

Students served by SDSBVI reside both at the residential school in Aberdeen, as well as, in school districts on a statewide basis. Outreach personnel employed by SDSBVI work with students who are blind or visually impaired in the public-school system.

SBVI and SDSBVI share information with students, parents, and local school districts about the importance of the skills of blindness to the success of students in the world of work. SBVI is an active participant in the transition planning process and counselors become involved with students as early as age 14. For those students enrolled at SDSBVI, SBVI representatives will attend pre-staffing meetings when appropriate. SBVI helps to determine appropriate vocational direction by providing work experiences and vocational counseling and guidance along with pre-employment transition services. The agreement clearly outlines that SBVI will attempt to have an IPE in place for every eligible student prior to graduation.

SDSBVI has responsibility for all South Dakota students with visual impairments under the age of twenty-one. For students of "transition age" between 14 and 21, that responsibility is shared with SBVI. The transition specialist and has outreach consultants work with students, families, schools, and SBVI staff on a statewide basis. Blind or visually impaired students residing in school districts that are unwilling to participate in project skills agreements are sometimes served through the SDSBVI transition specialist and outreach consultants to participate in paid work experiences.

Both SBVI and SDSBVI personnel are involved in transition services and regularly discuss mutual efforts and plan appropriate activities to benefit students and family members. Sharing of information takes place due to coordinated efforts between the Board of SBVI and the SDSBVI Advisory Council. Summer programs are coordinated to allow students to benefit from both SBVI and SDSBVI activities, and students are encouraged to participate in the Youth Leadership Forum, which is a week-long seminar to prepare high school age youth to be community leaders and self-advocates. All entities have been involved in planning the program, interviewing students, interviewing project staff and funding program activities.

SBVI also participates in an agreement for the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) which provides additional technical assistance and training to students with disabilities, families, local education agencies and adult service agencies. The agreement also includes the Office of Special Education and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The TSLP liaisons are trained professionals who collaborate to perform transition planning and provide the consultation necessary to promote a smooth transition for students from the educational setting to enter or prepare for employment.

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

The following activities are implemented by mutual involvement of SBVI and educational agencies as part of students IEPs and IPEs:

**Project Skills:** Project Skills is a paid work-based learning experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student's work history, references and assists them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges.

**Project SEARCH:** Project Search is a business led program. This means that students learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the business and those businesses are active partners, participating without subsidies. Project SEARCH is a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. South Dakota currently has five Project Search sites.

**Youth Leadership Forum (YLF):** YLF is a unique career and leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors to learn more about self-advocacy skills and disability awareness. Students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this annual five-day event that takes place on a college campus.

**Catch the Wave:** A one day conference designed specifically for high school students who have a disability and are considering postsecondary education (either college or technical institutes). Students learn about preparing for college life, securing appropriate accommodations, and developing self-advocacy and communication skills.

**Regional Transition Forums:** These forums are informal, interactive meetings for providers of services, transition age students with disabilities, as well as educators and family members.

**Postsecondary Disability Coordinators Forum:** This forum is held annually in Chamberlain (central South Dakota) with all the Disability Coordinators from South Dakota Postsecondary programs invited to attend. The forum has been a very successful initiative for promoting transition services for students with disabilities.

**Summer Institute:** The Summer Institute is a statewide training opportunity for Special Education teachers who are assisting students in the transition process. It is held for one week in the summer and offers training that addresses IDEA, Vocational Rehabilitation and introduces self-determination curriculum and other assessment materials, along with IEP planning for transition service provision. Teachers receive graduate credit for the class and gain knowledge from Disability Services Coordinators from postsecondary schools, vocational rehabilitation staff, Transition Liaisons, community mental health agencies and independent living services staff.

**SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) Transition Week:** SDRC hosts Transition Week each summer for high school juniors and seniors who are blind or visually impaired from around the state. Students participate in skills training in the traditional SDRC training areas: Computer training with assistive technology (including speech and Braille output); Travel with the use of a white cane; Communication methods including Braille; Home Management which addresses essential tasks of independent living that include cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, etc.; Manual Arts including use of hand and power tools to build confidence in using the skills of blindness; and Low Vision Services, using adaptive devices, worksite assessments and low vision evaluations.

Students are also offered the opportunity to job shadow at a variety of job sites, based on their individual interests. A person-centered approach assists them to experience self-exploration and self-advocacy skills. They also experience dorm life while staying at a university dormitory. Tours and

presentations from university staff help give them a better understanding of what to expect from postsecondary education after high school.

### **C. Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;**

Cooperative Agreement: Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities South Dakota's human service agencies and education system have forged a strong coalition to implement several pre-employment transition activities and transition services to prepare students with disabilities for post school activities that lead to successful employment outcomes. The South Dakota Cooperative Agreement Concerning Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities was revised in July 2017. The following South Dakota entities are included in the agreement: Office of Special Education, Division of Workforce and Career Preparation, Division of Behavioral Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Labor and Regulation and the Division of Child Protection Services.

The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities including: Consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post school activities, including vocation rehabilitation services; transition planning by personnel of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and school district personnel; roles and responsibilities of each agency including state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; financial responsibilities; and procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need pre-employment transition services and transition services.

The agreement presents a common policy and conceptual framework for addressing interagency transition planning at the local level, thus ensuring that youth with disabilities have access to the services and resources needed to enter adult life (and employment) successfully. Cooperating agencies will benefit from maximum coordination of services, more efficient utilization of agency resources, increased service options, and improved interagency communication. The collaborating state agencies support the following policy statements which are formalized in the interagency agreement: All South Dakota citizens, including youth with disabilities, will have opportunities for full participation in work and community life; All human services systems in South Dakota will assist individuals to achieve independence and self-sufficiency, and All human services systems in South Dakota recognize organized constituent groups of persons with disabilities as primary sources of information for program development by consulting with and advising such groups. The agreement will be reviewed and updated by the Core Partner Alignment Consortium with input from all participants in the agreement to ensure alignment with WIOA.

### **D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.**

SBVI developed a brochure to promote transition services and pre-employment transition services for students with vision loss to school personnel, students, parents and other entities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors distribute the brochure to all schools in their territories on an annual basis and meet with school personnel to discuss transition services for students with vision loss.

Cooperative agreement between SBVI and the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI): This agreement was implemented to coordinate efforts to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired receive effective, seamless services as they make the transition from school to adult life and employment. The agreement specifies roles and responsibilities including: Outreach by SDSBVI and SBVI personnel to identify students with vision loss who can benefit from transition services; Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies to plan for transition of students with disabilities from school to post school activities, including vocational rehabilitation

services; The role for transition planning by personnel of SBVI and SDSBVI and local school districts that facilitate the development and completion of individualized education programs; Roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of each agency and determination of state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and Procedures for outreach to and identification of students who are blind or visually impaired who need transition services.

SBVI and SDSBVI share information with students, parents, and local school districts about the importance of the skills of blindness to the success of students in the world of work. SBVI is an active participant in the transition planning process and counselors become involved with students as early as age 14. For those students enrolled at SDSBVI, SBVI representatives will also attend pre-staffing meetings when appropriate. SBVI helps to determine appropriate vocational direction by providing work experiences and vocational counseling and guidance along with pre-employment transition services. The agreement clearly stipulates that SBVI will attempt to have an IPE in place for every eligible student prior to graduation.

SDSBVI has a responsibility to all South Dakota students with visual impairments under the age of twenty-one. For students of "transition age" between 14 and 21, that responsibility is shared with SBVI. SDSBVI employs a transition specialist through a cooperative agreement with SBVI and has outreach consultants that work with students, families, schools, and SBVI staff on a statewide basis.

SBVI also participates in an agreement for the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) which provides additional technical assistance and training to students with disabilities, families, local education agencies and adult service agencies. The agreement also includes the Office of Special Education and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The TSLP liaisons are trained professionals who collaborate to perform transition planning and provide the consultation necessary to promote a smooth transition for students from the educational setting to enter or prepare for employment.

## e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

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

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) offer access to a variety of services from professionals trained in areas that benefit those who participate in services from the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI). South Dakota is a large sparsely populated state, the seventeenth largest state by area, but fifth smallest by population and the fifth least densely populated of the 50 United States. The option to access services through CRPs allows citizens with disabilities access to a variety of services. CRPs consist of Community Support Providers, Mental Health Centers, Career Learning Centers, Job Shops, Independent Living Centers, and Communication Services for the Deaf.

In conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, SBVI has policies and procedures in place for provider standards to establish and approve service providers. Clients are provided choices in the selection of providers. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors issue authorizations to the provider for services agreed upon in the Individual Plan for Employment. The scope of services purchased depends upon each individual's needs, interests and employment goal.

The Divisions of SBVI and DRS continually work on improving the capacity and quality of services from CRPs. A variety of education and training options are developed to offer the opportunity for CRP staff to become Certified Employment Support Professionals. Those who meet requirements for certification and attend two-day person-centered thinking training receive a 25% increase in their service rate. Thirty-six hours of continuing education are required every three years to maintain the certification. SBVI annually assesses the training needs of staff and plans future training activities or identifies other resources to meet those needs.

SBVI provides blindness specific training to employment support professionals to improve the quality of service provision for citizens with vision loss. This 5 ½ hour web-based training is a four-part series that is available to providers via the SBVI website.

## f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

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

The coordination of time limited and ongoing support services is vital to the provision of supported employment services. The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired works collaboratively with service providers and public and nonprofit agencies to coordinate funding sources and policies related to supported employment. These efforts are categorized into two areas: Formal Cooperative Agreements and Informal Cooperative Efforts with Agencies

**Formal Cooperative Arrangements:** SBVI and the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) have in place a formal cooperative agreement for transition services (including pre-employment transition services) for youth with disabilities. The agreement includes the Department of Human Services Divisions of SBVI and DRS and the Divisions of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, Office of Special Education, and the Department of Labor and Regulation. The purpose of the cooperative agreement is to define: services including supported employment; eligibility requirements; referral process; responsibilities of each agency; extended support services to be provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Behavioral Health; time-limited services to be provided by SBVI and DRS; the process for service plan development; requirements for transition to extended services; and, responsibilities for post-employment services.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities has a policy memorandum in place with the Divisions of SBVI and DRS. The memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated regarding time limited and ongoing support services. This agreement has had a significant impact on service provision for people with the most significant impediments to employment resulting in the ability to obtain and maintain employment.

A Memorandum of Understanding is in place to help with coordination of services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health, SBVI, and DRS. This agreement serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local SBVI and DRS Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness: Services to be provided by the Community Mental Health Center; Services available from Vocational Rehabilitation; and, Appropriate Division to pay for the variety of services.

**Informal cooperative arrangements with agencies:** SBVI works collaboratively with other State agencies on a day to day basis to better serve individuals with disabilities. Following are some of these collaborative efforts: SBVI State Office staff are co-located with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, communication to coordinate services between Divisions occurs as needed for citizens with a variety of disabilities. SBVI's vocational rehabilitation counselors are co-located with the local Department of Labor and Regulation Offices in the state's two largest cities. When vocational rehabilitation counselors travel, they make frequent visits to collaborate with staff from the Department of Labor and Regulation, Social Services, Community Rehabilitation Programs and other agencies to reinforce mutual clients and a seamless delivery system. The public vocational rehabilitation agencies are working closely with all partners identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to collaborate in the implementation of the mandates in the law. Staff serve on implementation workgroups, task forces, and local Interagency Resource Teams.

## g. Coordination with Employers



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

## 1. VR Services; and

See What I Can Do Outreach Campaign: SBVI developed an outreach campaign with employers specifically targeted as part of the audience to be reached by the campaign. Focus groups and surveys of employers provided insight about their awareness of the capabilities of citizens with vision loss and the availability of SBVI services. A television ad, radio ads, brochure and banner stands were developed to promote hiring citizens with vision loss as well as relying on SBVI for job retention for current employees. Materials include students and youth with disabilities to promote employer engagement.

Business Representatives on the Board of SBVI: There are two business led non-profit entities in South Dakota that offer supports to the business community. The Business Resource Network in Sioux Falls and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills in Rapid City provide education, consulting, and technical assistance to businesses on the hiring, accommodations, supports and retention when employing people with disabilities. The Executive Director of the Workforce Diversity Network is a former SBVI client and a member of the Board of SBVI. The manager of the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (in the Division of SBVI) is on the governing board for the BRN. The Workforce Development Council representative on the Board of SBVI is the gubernatorial appointed Department Secretary for the Department of Labor and Regulation. This representation brings the employer/business perspective to strategic planning and Board activities.

Business Organization Involvement: The Division is working towards increasing memberships and regular involvement of staff within organizations to connect with employers. Some examples of the organizations include local Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. These opportunities support connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and technical assistance and training opportunities.

Business Engagement Teams: Business engagement teams at the local level strengthen cross agency partnerships and focus on opportunities to engage businesses. This model ensures interaction and collaboration between workforce development partners and the business community, including business led organizations like the South Dakota Retailers Association, the Society for Human Resource Managers and Chambers of Commerce. The opportunity for an open line of communication for addressing industry demands for skills and preparing citizens for successful career paths will help to sustain and expand business partnerships.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP): The SBVI Business Enterprise Program supports snack shop, cafeteria and vending opportunities for citizens who are blind. In addition to federal sites, the BEP operates in all state office buildings in the state capitol of Pierre. The BEP is partially supported by income from interstate vending through an agreement with the South Dakota Department of Transportation. Blind vendors and the SBVI BEP manager interact with businesses and employers to promote program expansion and sustain existing operations.

## 2. Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

Initiatives with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities to facilitate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and transition services (including pre-employment transition services) for students and youth with disabilities

South Dakota Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has implemented and participated in a number of initiatives to work with employers to benefit students and youth with vision loss who are served through SBVI. These initiatives include:

**Project Skills:** Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student's work history, references and assists them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and school staff identify employment sites, businesses, and employers to match the students with work experiences in their interest areas. Employers benefit by

**Project Search:** Project Search is a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. South Dakota currently has Project Search sites in Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Other opportunities to expand Project Search sites will be explored with businesses in South Dakota.

## **h. Interagency Cooperation**

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

### **1. The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;**

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, in conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services has formal and informal interagency arrangements that define levels of cooperation with a number of agencies and organizations to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment.

**State Medicaid Plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act:** The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS) is the State's Medicaid Agency. The South Dakota Department of Human Services has the following agreements with the DSS Medicaid Agency.

**Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation as well as Guardianship and Conservatorship:** This agreement was implemented on August 1, 2013 to assure each agency's response to meet the needs of persons who are at risk for abuse, neglect and exploitation or in need of guardianship and or conservatorship services.

**Interagency Resource Teams:** This agreement was implemented to meet the need for continued interagency involvement at the local level in an efficient and effective manner. This agreement ensures that resources available through the State of South Dakota are available to citizens with disabilities, including those who face barriers to employment; addresses fully utilizing the capacity and expertise of each agency and encourages the continuing efforts and participation of local interagency teams.

**Money Follows the Person:** This agreement was implemented on June 10, 2014 for the implementation of the Money Follows the Person initiative involving persons eligible for Medicaid waiver services.

**Medicaid Fraud Control:** This agreement was implemented on July 1, 2015 for the purpose of defining mutual responsibilities in the Medicaid Program to ensure maximum efficiency and benefit to the State and to minimize duplication of effort. Title XIX Medicaid Funding Memorandum of Understanding This agreement was implemented for the purpose of defining administrative and fiscal accountability responsibilities.

**State Agency Responsible for Providing Mental Health Services:** The South Dakota Department of Social Services/Division of Behavioral Health is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with psychiatric disabilities. A Memorandum is in place to help coordinate the services and

funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness: Services that can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center, Services available from Vocational Rehabilitation (DRS and SBVI), and Which Division pays for the services.

The Core Partner Alignment Consortium will review and revise agreements as necessary to meet the requirements of WIOA.

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

State Agency Responsible for Developmental Disabilities: The South Dakota Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This agency is in the same department as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs (SBVI and DRS) allowing the opportunity for regular communication and collaboration between programs.

Policy Memorandum with Division of Developmental Disabilities: The Division of Developmental Disabilities has a Policy Memorandum in place with the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Policy Memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated in regard to time limited and on-going support services. This policy agreement has had a significant impact on how services are provided to individuals with the most significant impediments to employment.

## 3. The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

State Agency Responsible for Providing Mental Health Services: The South Dakota Department of Social Services/Division of Behavioral Health is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with psychiatric disabilities. A Memorandum is in place to help coordinate the services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness: Services that can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center, Services available from Vocational Rehabilitation (DRS and SBVI), and Which Division pays for the services.

The Core Partner Alignment Consortium will review and revise agreements as necessary to meet the requirements of WIOA.

Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities: This agreement was implemented for the purpose of enabling students with disabilities to reach their maximum potential in their transition from high school to the adult world. This agreement includes the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, Developmental Disabilities Agency, Department of Social Services/Division of Behavioral Health, Department of Education/Special Education and the Department of Labor and Regulation.

## i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

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

## 1. System on Personnel and Personnel Development

### A. Qualified Personnel Needs

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

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

Currently, SBVI employs seven vocational rehabilitation counselors who serve citizens with vision loss statewide and one vocational rehabilitation counselor who works primarily at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. A total of 534 people were served during Program Year (PY) 2018 (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019), remaining stable from 533 in PY 2017; 92% were reported to have significant disabilities in PY 2018, a slight decrease from 94% in PY 2017. Caseloads, territories, and customer service are reviewed periodically to determine the best utilization of existing staff and to determine future ratios to best meet the needs of the people receiving vocational rehabilitation services. For PY 2018, the ratio of counselors compared to the eligible people receiving services is an average of 1:73 clients per caseload. The remaining active caseload as of 10/01/2019 was an average of 1:45 active clients per caseload. The changes in the caseload size are typically impacted by the changes in the economy and unemployment rates. It is the goal of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to remain under the ratio of 1:60 active clients per counselor. The Division evaluates the need for a position in a specific location before replacing an employee when a vacancy occurs. Counselors who serve sparsely populated areas cover large territories and serve fewer clients due to demographics of a large sparsely populated state. Those with larger caseloads work in urban areas with higher population which results in less travel to deliver services.

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

Total positions; Current Vacancies:

FFY 2019 FTE:

Administrative = 5; Vacancies = 0

VR Counselors = 7; Vacancies = 0

Rehab Center Rehabilitation Teachers = 6; Vacancies = 0

Rehab Center Rehabilitation Manager = 1; Vacancies = 0

Rehab Center Rehabilitation Counselor = 1; Vacancies = 0

Rehab Center Program Specialists = 1; Vacancies = 1

Rehab Center Clerical Support = 2; Vacancies = 0

iii. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to

be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

The following illustrates the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and includes projected vacancies in the next 5 years. The projected vacancies indicated below are for personnel who are expected to retire or turnover of staff.

Type of Position Total Positions Current Vacancies 5-year projected vacancies:

Administration Current 5.0 Vacancies 0 Retirement 1.0;  
Counselors Current 8.0 Vacancies 0 Retirement 2.0;  
Support Staff 2.0 Current Vacancies 0 Retirement 1.0;  
Rehabilitation Center Teachers Current 6.0 Vacancies 0 Retirement 2.0;  
Rehabilitation Center Administration Current 2.0 Vacancies 1 Retirement 1.0

## 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;

South Dakota State University is the only institution of higher education in South Dakota that provides degrees in vocational rehabilitation (bachelors and masters).

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has implemented procedures and activities to ensure staff receive training so they are able to deliver quality services to citizens with vision loss and to ensure the Division has an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals. The Assistant Director of SBVI is the designated training officer for the Division; this position works with the DRS training officer and other SBVI and DRS staff to coordinate activities related to the comprehensive system of personnel development.

**Data System on Qualified Personnel Needs** The system to collect and analyze data related to qualified personnel needs and personnel development consists of two components. The South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) maintains a database of all training activities attended by Division staff including BHR sponsored training, seminars, workshops, conferences, and undergraduate and graduate level courses supported by the Division. Individual district offices maintain files on educational backgrounds, training activities and goals and plans of employees to meet the agency requirements for qualified rehabilitation professionals and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). Supervisors are required to address training needs as a part of the annual employee evaluation. Individual training needs are reported to the training officer to be considered in the analysis of results from the annual training needs assessment. This analysis assists with prioritizing future training.

The Division has a web-based management information system (VR FACES) which includes a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) module for tracking employee training and education. This system also tracks whether Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are certified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) or their development plan to work toward CRC status. Input of information is required of individual employees and/or supervisors with access to all information by the Training Officer and other management staff. This system is efficient for addressing individual training needs as well as for projecting future personnel and training

priorities. Staff progress toward meeting CSPD requirements is also tracked by the VR FACES system.

The Division is committed to assisting vocational rehabilitation counselors with obtaining the necessary academic training and professional experience to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. During FFY 2018, one employee of the Division is pursuing a master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation through Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). One newer counselor has applied and will begin master's classes at South Dakota State University, and another newer Counselor has obtained her master's degree but has not yet passed the CRC exam.

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

Sixteen students were enrolled in the South Dakota State University (SDSU) master's vocational rehabilitation counseling program in the 2018-2019 year. Currently there are 12 enrolled with 8 enrolled with RSA funds.

**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.**

During FFY 2017, three students graduated from SDSU Masters in VR program and all were on the RSA funding. During FFY 2018, three students graduated from SDSU Masters in VR program and all were on the RSA funding. Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired hired one of their graduated students in June 2019.

Newly hired rehabilitation counselors are encouraged to pursue a master's degree and become Certified Rehabilitation Counselors if they have not already obtained that certification. The Division will support costs associated with pursuit of master's degrees. Funds for supporting employees' pursuit of master's level degrees consist of RSA grants, and program 110 funds. Senior rehabilitation counselors are certified through the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor process. The priority for filling counselor vacancies is a master's degree and CRC certification. Eligibility for CRC certification (already possesses a master's degree but no certification) is the next preferred option. Due to lower starting salaries compared to most surrounding states, it is necessary to hire individuals with bachelor's degrees for entry—level counselor positions and encourage them to become qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors within a specific time period.

## **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.

Recruitment of qualified staff is accomplished by announcing positions through professional organization such as the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) and RehabACTion, the state Bureau of Human Resources web site and other job search sites, such as Indeed. The Department of Human Services Facebook page will share job announcements for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor vacancies as well. Job announcements are shared with the Board of SBVI and the state Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, as well as

professional and client organizations, such as blind client organizations, South Dakota RehabACTION and South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.

Retention and advancement are accomplished through the opportunity for rehabilitation counselors to participate in the master's level vocational rehabilitation education programs and obtain CRCC certification. Once they meet the requirements, they can be promoted to a Senior Counselor. Senior rehabilitation counselors are also encouraged to apply for management and administrative positions when vacancies occur.

Training opportunities are available through a variety of organizations to assist SBVI in preparing staff to deliver training and to retrain in priority areas for vocational rehabilitation service provision. ACVREP provides training in blindness specific topics; this training leads to professional certification in vision rehabilitation, orientation and mobility, and low vision therapy. Agency sponsored training through seminars, conferences, video conferences, and other training opportunities on topics such as: Customized Employment using the Discovery Process; Strategies/Tools to be more effective for Discovery; Accommodating Employees with Disabilities; Charting the Life Course for Employment; Employer Law; The Interactive Process with Employers; Providing Mental Health Supports during Post-Secondary Education; Energizing Pre-ETS to Enhance Successful Post-School Outcomes; Engaging Future Employers & Business Relationships; Identification of Condition and Basic Tips on Brain Injury, Mental Health Conditions, Dementia, Deaf-Blindness, and Diabetes; Employment Oriented Instruction; Counseling with Clients who are Blind; Peripheral Field Loss; and Glaucoma and other Vision-Related Eye Conditions. Web based training is also available for a variety of topics.

Training opportunities related to the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are sponsored and attended by a variety of participants from state departments and public and private entities.

To address the priority of recruiting individuals with disabilities, the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources has in rule that any applicant who meets minimum requirements for employment who has been certified to have a significant disability by a rehabilitation counselor will be interviewed for the position, commonly referred to as disability preference. This ensures that individuals who have disabilities have the opportunity to interview and compete for openings in the designated state unit and other programs in state government. Efforts to recruit individuals from minority backgrounds include announcing positions through the State Department of Labor and Regulation and the state's Native American Vocational Rehabilitation programs. Job announcements are available to individuals residing on Tribal lands and the state's Reservations. It is the policy of the Department to provide equal opportunity employment to all employees and applicants for employment. No person working at the Department's facilities is to be discriminated against in employment because of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, or disability.

SBVI anticipates the need to recruit three counselors in the next five-year period based on personnel turnover trends and data on those eligible for retirement in this time period. South Dakota State University (SDSU) offers a Master of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. SDSU started their master's program in the fall of 2005, and their first student received a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling in the fall of 2007. Recruitment of qualified staff is accomplished through promoting job announcements at SDSU in addition to other universities in Region VIII with master's level programs. SBVI has a cooperative agreement with SDSU to provide internship opportunities, participate on their advisory council, and to recruit qualified candidates. SBVI provides paid internship opportunities for students pursuing their master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division also offers internship opportunities for students with other related degrees when appropriate.

The University of Northern Colorado, Montana State University and Utah State University are other sources for recruitment of graduates with master's level degrees in vocational rehabilitation counseling. In addition, South Dakota universities offer accredited programs with master's degrees in counseling. Graduates of these programs are recruited for vocational rehabilitation counselor openings. They are hired and trained to prepare for the CRCC to meet the highest qualifications in the state for rehabilitation counselors.

SBVI has a high percentage of staff with disabilities (24%). Reasonable accommodations are provided to ensure employees with disabilities have access to the latest technology to perform their jobs. Staff who are blind are provided drivers as a reasonable accommodation.

### 3. Personnel Standards

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

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

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has implemented procedures and activities to ensure staff receive training so they are able to deliver quality services to citizens with vision loss and to ensure the Division has an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals. The Assistant Director of SBVI is the designated training officer for the Division; this position works with the DRS training officer and other SBVI and DRS staff to coordinate activities related to the comprehensive system of personnel development.

Working in conjunction with the Bureau of Human Resources, the Division has established minimum state standards for secretarial, rehabilitation counselors, senior rehabilitation counselors and program administrator positions. These standards are reviewed periodically considering changing personnel needs, labor market supply and training resources. These are generic job classifications within the state Bureau of Human Resources system. The Division does establish specific education and work experience requirements in order for individuals to enter these positions.

Since South Dakota is a small state, there are several unique staff positions. Each year in the personnel performance evaluation process, SBVI identifies the professional development needs of these staff. Each employee's immediate supervisor monitors individualized staff development plans. National certification standards are used for the Orientation and Mobility Specialist and the Low Vision Therapist through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). The Assistive Technology Specialist attends regional and national training to keep up to date on the latest advances in technology. In addition, staff members hold certifications for Deaf-Blind services from Helen Keller National Center; Traumatic Brain Injury, Braille and assistive technology through training and various accrediting organizations.

Newly hired rehabilitation counselors that possess only a bachelor's degree are encouraged to pursue a master's degree and senior rehabilitation counselor status. The Division will support costs associated with pursuit of master's degrees.

Funds for supporting employees' pursuit of master's level degrees consist of RSA grants and program 110 funds. Senior rehabilitation counselors are certified through the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor process. The priority for filling counselor vacancies is a master's degree and CRC certification. Eligibility for CRC certification (already possesses a master's degree but no certification) is the next preferred option. Due to lower starting salaries compared to most surrounding states, it is necessary to hire individuals with bachelor's degrees for entry-level counselor positions and encourage them to become qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors within eight years. The following illustrates the completion date anticipated for counselors in the next five years: hire date in 2020, target date to complete CSPD standards by 2028; hire date in 2021, target date to complete CSPD standards by 2029; hire date in 2022, target date to complete CSPD standards by 2030, hire date in 2023, target



date to complete CSPD standards by 2031; and hire date in 2024, target date to complete CSPD standards by 2032.

Leadership and management training and assignments with senior level management teams assist counselors to prepare for supervisory and administrative positions. Senior rehabilitation counselors are encouraged to apply for management and administrative positions when there are vacancies.

The Rehabilitation Act as amended, and the Vocational Rehabilitation regulations refer to “Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors”. SBVI has the following definitions in place to address qualified rehabilitation counselors employed by the Division:

All Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

- a. meet the standards for Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
- b. meet the standards for Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor but are not CRC certified;
- c. meet the standards for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
- d. have been employed by the Division for a minimum of six months; and
- e. have an approved plan to be eligible to take the CRC certification test by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) within eight years.

Employees who are not qualified rehabilitation counselors receive oversight and monitoring by a CRC certified supervisor and mentoring by senior counselors for non—delegated functions of the VR process. Counselors who meet the requirements to become certified through the CRCC are considered qualified counselors. However, to be eligible for a promotion to senior counselor, counselors are required to be certified by the CRCC. Six of the eight SBVI counselors are CRC certified. Two counselors are taking master’s level coursework through SDSU and VCU and are in an approved plan for pursuing CRC certification. One counselor has her master’s degree and is pursuing obtaining her CRC certification.

## **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.**

Cooperation with other entities in state government such as the Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR), the Department of Health, and the Department of Education ensures that training opportunities are available which address topics relevant to the field of rehabilitation. In addition, Division staff members provide training concerning considerations when working with individuals with disabilities to DLR employees. Division staff members have various opportunities to attend intensive trainings at little or no cost. These conferences and/or seminars are also an opportunity to collaborate with other entities who deliver services to individuals with disabilities. DLR employees provide training on labor market trends, economic development opportunities, business engagement and other information. Training on labor market information is also conducted online via the Labor Market Information (LMI) e—Learning Series. This five-part video series provides information on how LMI can be a useful resource for local offices, workforce development professionals, policy makers, business owners, program or economic development planners, etc. The modules are based on a benchmark PowerPoint version provided by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Leadership development and capacity building are addressed through distance learning courses as well as agency sponsored training sessions. Assistive technology training is available through DakotaLink, the state’s assistive technology project, the SBVI Assistive Technology Specialist, and other nationally recognized entities via web-based training. The State Bureau of Information and Technology and Bureau of Human Resources provide assistive technology training

for employees with disabilities who utilize assistive technology on the job, and when requested, will provide individualized training.

Annual training conferences address current research by contracting with national Rehabilitation Research and Training and Technical Assistance programs to address specific topics identified in the annual training needs assessment. In addition, information is disseminated from RSA updates and Technical Assistance Circulars to ensure SBVI staff are cognizant of the latest trends in vocational rehabilitation.

SBVI works with the state's Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Projects to provide training to staff on cultural diversity. Ongoing training is provided to address informed choice as it relates to agency policies and practices. The State Rehabilitation Council has recommended strategies that have been implemented for addressing informed choice in service delivery and training that addresses the evolving labor force and needs of people with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

## 4. Staff Development

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

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

The Division is committed to assisting vocational rehabilitation counselors with obtaining the necessary academic training and professional experience to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. During FFY 2019, one employee of the Division was pursuing a master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation through Virginia Commonwealth University, and in FFY 2020, one new employee of the Division is in the process of applying to the master's program in Vocational Rehabilitation through South Dakota State University.

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has approached personnel development through a number of avenues. Each employee's current level of education and training, as well as short term and long-term training needs are tracked by supervisors who evaluate methods for addressing these needs at least annually through the Accountability and Competency Evaluation (ACE). Individual training needs assessments are conducted to evaluate current levels of education, understanding of fundamentals of vocational rehabilitation, blindness and disability— related issues, professional development and related topics. Self-evaluation, supervisor input and recommendation sections on the ACE assist in assessing needs for training which may be pursued through a number of approaches. The results of the assessments are recorded for individuals, groups of related positions (i.e. rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers, supervisors, managers, clerical, etc.) and for the agency as a whole. The ACE system allows for ongoing feedback between employees and supervisors by incorporating a self-audit while addressing professionalism, work quality and areas for development as well as areas of strength. Training needs are addressed utilizing a form that not only identifies needed training, but also includes fields for the date the training is scheduled and the date it is attended. BHR workshops are identified under the following headings: supervisory, job enrichment, and technology with other training and job-specific skills also included in the document used to track training needs and attendance. The training officer works to identify resources for

obtaining training in areas related to vocational rehabilitation (including the Rehabilitation Act Amendments and priorities in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and RSA regulations), including serving citizens with the most significant disabilities and those from minority backgrounds. Responses from satisfaction surveys and input from the Board of SBVI are also methods utilized to identify training needs.

Paraprofessional staff are offered ongoing training in word processing and other software applications as well as office-related courses such as effective writing, customer service and organization skills through the BHR. Courses specific to the vocational rehabilitation case management information system and other topics specific to vocational rehabilitation are offered through in-service training sessions, usually taught by agency specialty staff. Training was provided and is ongoing in the use of FileDirector, an electronic scanned copy of case file records that SBVI has transitioned to in FFY2019. Paraprofessional and professional staff scan documents into the system and will continue to learn other tips and tricks to navigating in FileDirector.

SBVI works closely with DakotaLink, the state's assistive technology project funded, in part, through section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. DakotaLink provide hand's on training on assistive technology in group settings and on an individual basis. The DakotaLink Coordinator of Technical Services is a member of the Board of SBVI and serves on the Assistive Technology Committee for the Division of SBVI. Rehabilitation Counselors also are required to attend training at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, including training on assistive technology. One DakotaLink Tech that specializes in blindness is housed in the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and is available to assist with assistive technology needs of clients and staff. The SBVI Assistive Technology Instructor is available for technical assistance and training statewide via video conferencing, Skype and Face Time in addition to onsite training.

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

Annual training conferences address current research through contracting with national Rehabilitation Research and Training and Technical Assistance programs to address specific topics identified in the annual training needs assessment. In addition, information is disseminated from RSA updates and Technical Assistance Circulars to ensure SBVI staff are cognizant of the latest trends in vocational rehabilitation. Monthly video conferences address relevant topics in a timely manner.

Training on IDEA and transition services for students with disabilities is coordinated with the State Division of Special Education and the Transition Services Liaison Project. The annual Youth Leadership Forum is planned in collaboration with the Special Education Program, Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Transition Project. The annual Fall Conferences is a combined effort with the Department of Education Special Education Program, Department of Labor and Regulation, other Divisions within the Department of Human Services and other entities to offer training on transition and pre-employment transition service options.

Training needs of the state's Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, Centers for Independent Living, the Client Assistance Program and community rehabilitation programs are considered in planning training activities within the division.

Training needs are addressed through a variety of resources. Other resources accessed by staff to meet their individual training needs include workshops, conferences and seminars hosted by other government organizations such as Special Education, Department of Labor and Regulation and the Bureau of Human Resources. Professional organizations (SD RehabACTion, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, etc.) regularly work with the training officer to prioritize topics relevant to employment of people with disabilities and base workshops or conference sessions on the training needs assessment conducted by the Division. Client

organizations (SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, SD Association of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind of SD, and the SD Association of the Deaf) are examples of sponsors of training. Distance learning activities provide a cost-effective method for participation in training on a number of topics pertinent to RSA priorities. Independent study and mentoring by supervisors and senior rehabilitation counselors are other means for meeting individual staff development needs.

## 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.

Sign language interpreters are available for all training sessions for participants with hearing loss as well as for those who are deaf/blind. CART services have been available at conferences for individuals who are deaf, in addition to sign language interpreters. Braille, materials in electronic format and enlarged print are provided to all staff or clients who request alternative formats. The Division has developed fee schedules and vendors to address the need for interpreters of foreign languages and Native American languages including Lakota, Nakota and Dakota dialects.

## 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.

Training on IDEA and transition services for students with disabilities is coordinated with the State Division of Special Education and the Transition Services Liaison Project. The annual Youth Leadership Forum is planned in collaboration with the Special Education Program, Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Transition Services Liaison Project. The annual Fall Conferences are a combined effort with the Department of Education, Special Education Program, Department of Labor and Regulation and other entities to offer training on transition and pre-employment transition service options. In addition, SBVI works with the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to address needs of students with vision loss on a statewide basis.

### j. Statewide Assessment

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

A. With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

“Individual with a Most Significant Disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and *in addition* has serious limits in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals who meet the criteria for this Priority Level I category are determined to be individuals with the “Most Significant Disability”. The needs identified for this category were as follows:

## 1. Transition Services Cooperative Agreement

SBVI's specialized mission and lower numbers in terms of caseload size creates a profile of need in transition services that can better be understood in terms of more individualized needs of students with visual impairments or blindness. Issues of accessibility, specialized skill needs, and support accelerate for young students with most significant disabilities as they reach transition age. Consequently, the term transition for this group of persons with disabilities is frequently expressed as a stage of life confluence of problems to be solved. The need for assistive technology training, ongoing support, accessibility advocacy were the most frequently expressed needs in the 'transitions' context even though these are also lifetime challenges for SBVI clients with the most significant disabilities.

## 2. Counseling and Guidance:

Counselors expressed a need for training in assisting their clients in self-confidence and motivation. Related were requests from staff for continued access to benefits counseling and help in providing a person-centered approach to services.

## 3. Administrative Infrastructure:

SBVI joined the chorus of need for support from both agencies (DRS/SBVI) in cultivating more providers with the necessary skills to work with their specialized caseloads and more training resources for specialty staff. Finally, as has been the case for both agencies that additional long-term supports are needed for their clients including older blind clients.

## 4. Job Development and Placement:

For those with the most significant disabilities there was a request for alternatives to sheltered work now that it is no longer an acceptable outcome and for additional job development and placement support from persons qualified to respond to the needs of blind and low vision clients.

## 5. Assistive Technology (AT)

Leadership and field staff emphasized the need for continued support and resources for AT into the future. Because of the satisfaction often expressed for the current arrangement for AT services this need also falls under the heading of preserving assets.

## B. Who are minorities;

SBVI reviewed data, inquired through the SBVI Board and surveyed staff regarding possible underservice for individuals with disabilities with particular attention on assessing any unmet needs of individuals who are members of minority communities. The following chart reflects that SBVI caseloads for minorities exceed the state population. However, needs were identified that indicate areas to be addressed.

	2019 Caseloads	STATE POPULATION
<b>White</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>85.0%</b>
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Black or African American</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Two or more races</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

**Language Culture and Public Education:** While data revealed a proportionate response to population, narrative responses emphasized the need for staff, employer and public education activities and events that addressed language and communication, cultural sensitivity and training. Also emphasized was addressing immigrant attitudes and fears regarding 'government services' and the difficulty previous immigrant experiences presented in referral finding and service. Significantly this set of responses regarding minorities is become more diversified particularly in larger communities such as Sioux Falls with growing immigrant communities. In the data sets many immigrant groups are likely to be statistically underrepresented. Respondents expressed an increased awareness that the success of VR services is contingent on public awareness and willingness to work with minorities and immigrants. Staff requested additional support in expanding cross education and communications with tribal programs.

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

**Behavioral Health:** Surveys including staff and leadership expressed the need for more and extended supports for persons with severe and persistent mental illness in rural communities and, also referred to additional support when working with Tribal programs. Related needs were expressed under public education following this category of need in terms of communities of support and outreach relative to older blind populations

**Public Education:** Staff described issues of mobility and access for older blind and anticipated the need for communities of support and outreach.

**Access:** Access needs were described not in the context of underservice, but more as needs experienced at the level of mainstream functional community rather than agency. The needs ranged from access service provision to people with blindness trying to operate in medical and retail settings as well as occasionally some public agencies. These needs were often presented as education needs. People also requested technical assistance to employers and the public as necessary prerequisites to full participation of persons with low vision or blindness.

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

South Dakota has entered the WIOA era with an existing comprehensive and coordinated public and private statewide workforce investment system. Throughout the WIA era South Dakota VR programs have had a partnership of agencies and employer resources described in the Unified Plan with the South Dakota Workforce Development Council. Public vocational rehabilitation has been represented on the State Workforce Development Council. In addition to the methods of identifying needs described elsewhere in this attachment, SBVI personnel partner with the state workforce system through local interagency teams, and by attending and presenting at statewide workforce conferences. SBVI currently participates on the Department of Labor and Regulation WIOA Implementation and Planning Group to assure the shifts in emphasis in the statewide vision and goals meets the needs persons with disabilities and are in alignment with the resources and opportunities of the greater South Dakota economic community.

1. **Administrative Infrastructure:** The feedback of need regarding the Workforce Partners and system was limited given the specialized nature of the Division. The needs that were commented on addressed the general need for a coordinated client experience provided across agency lines including requests for increased data sharing.
2. **Employer Education and Support:** In this need category, the emphasis was educating employers on non-intuitive aspects of the low vision and blindness experience. In this context we can include the need for coordination of employer contacts in local communities and particularly smaller communities among job placement specialists and job developers.

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

Due to the progressive nature of vision loss, the majority of applicants in Program Year 2018 were between the ages of 45-64 (106). Twenty-six students/youth participated in services in the same period.

Youth with disabilities are defined as individuals with disabilities between the age of 14 and 24 (under 25). Students with disabilities are defined as individuals with disabilities between the ages of 16 and under 21 as of July 1<sup>st</sup>; and enrolled in a secondary school receiving services under an Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan. Students with disabilities can receive Pre-Employment Transition Services without applying for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) are required, in collaboration with the local educational agencies, to provide, or arrange for the provision of, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for all students with disabilities in need of such services without regard to the type of disability from VR funds reserved for this purpose.

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required to set aside 15% of the Federal Award each year to provide the Required and Coordination of Pre-Employment Transition Services. The remaining balance can be utilized for Authorized Activities. These categories are explained below. In addition, Pre-ETS may be provided to all students with disabilities, regardless if they have applied for VR services. These students with disabilities who have not applied are recorded as Potentially Eligible (PE) in VR FACES.

### Calculation of 15% Reserve Funds for FFY 2020

#### I. Total Number of Students with disabilities in South Dakota

Using Special Ed data for SFY 2019

2,748 on IEP

749 on 504 Plans

3,497 Total Students with Disabilities ages 16-21

#### II. Determine the number of students with disabilities who need Pre-ETS

Using VR data, 1234 students with disabilities were in the VR FACES for SFY 2019

#### III. Calculate the cost for the provision of Pre-ETS

\$1,638,380.13 needed for Pre-ETS

#### IV. Calculate the amount of funds reserved for the provision of Pre-ETS

DRS & SBVI FFY 2020 Award is \$11,107,868.00

15% is \$1,666,180.20

#### V. Set Aside Amount

\$27,800.07

1. **Transition Cooperative Agreement:** This category surfaced needs for increased counselor connectivity to schools including closer IEP working relationships, early education of parents and students, additional student services in summer month.
2. **Administrative Infrastructure:** Surveys, SBVI staff and leadership articulated needs in this context in the focus of continued refinement of the service connections and relationships between SBVI, DRS, schools and the community providers.
3. **Additional CRP/Provider services:** Respondents specified customized employment capacity and resources necessary for placement, stabilization and longer-term support of clients experiencing blindness or low vision.

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

1. **CRP Provider Services:** Respondents described the need for job placement providers in rural and urban settings. Related were expressions of need for a broader range of provider services including home services.
2. **Independent Living:** When respondents described needs in the context of living independently, the focus was primarily on the needs for medical and social support for the medically fragile client and elderly clients with blindness and or low vision.
3. **Administrative Infrastructure:** Two Commentators focused on provider training regarding billing and the VR process.
4. **Rural Access/Economy/Job Development/Placement:** These two categories of need repeated the need of job placement specialists in primarily rural areas and job placement personnel qualified to serve low vision and blind clients in both rural and urban settings.

## 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

Rehabilitation Counselors focus on counseling and guidance, working closely with students to determine an employment goal based on their interests, skills and abilities, and plan services that will help them to obtain their goal of employment. Of plans developed for youth, counseling and guidance is the most common service at 90%, followed by transportation to attend pre-employment transition activities at 33%. SBVI has an agreement with the SD School for the Blind & Visually Impaired for a Transition Specialist who provides statewide transition services to schools and students with vision loss.

In conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, SBVI has an agreement with the South Dakota Office of Special Education to fund the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP). The TSLP provides technical assistance and training to students, parents, local education agencies and adult service agencies to assist with transition activities that result in a successful transition from education to postsecondary opportunities and employment.



1. **Transition Services Cooperative Agreement:** The emphasis of the cooperative agreement related to needs focused on refining the connection of VR agency staff with transitioning students and school staff to increase referrals. The surveys and interviews also described the need to reach out to parents and students in terms of general orientation to transition services and timing. Finally, comments occurred in both agencies identifying the need for cross training adult service and school personnel regarding related policies and procedures.
2. **Administrative Infrastructure:** Field service and leadership interviews emphasized the need to continue the refinement of coordination of the resources of SBVI, DRS and CRPs in building the South Dakota transition program.
3. **Additional CRP/Provider services:** Additional customized employment capacity and resources were requested.

## k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

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

According to the 2017 Cornell University Disability Status Report there are approximately 11,400 South Dakota citizens with a visual disability between the ages of 16 and 74. Approximately 3,200 or 41% of people between the ages of 21 to 64 are working full time/full year employment. For the same age group of 21 to 64, South Dakota citizens with visual disabilities had the fifth highest employment rate in the nation of working-age people with visual disabilities at 57.8%. In FFY 2020, it is estimated that 534 eligible citizens will be served by SBVI.

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

#### A. The VR Program;

To assist the Statewide Workforce System in developing the needs determination section of the State Unified Plan, SBVI provides all partners the statewide estimates of individuals who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and supported employment services and the costs for services provided as planning and programming data as part of the SBVI state plan update. These annual estimates are reported to the State Workforce Development Council as part of partner planning for addressing service needs statewide to include services to citizens with disabilities. Public vocational rehabilitation is represented on statewide workgroups that address service delivery and capacity among workforce partners including local needs of the one-stop centers across the state. The number of individuals eligible for services in the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has ranged from 195 to 244 over the past several years. In FY 2019, SBVI provided services to 533 people with 195 people found eligible for services during that year. During FY 2020, the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) estimates based on data from prior years and service projections that a total of 534 eligible citizens will receive services.

#### B. The Supported Employment Program; and

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired will not be receiving funds for Title VI Part B Supported Employment funds. Supported employment services will be provided utilizing Title I, Part B Vocational Rehabilitation funds.

#### C. Each priority category, if under an order of selection.

N/A

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

SBVI is currently able to provide services to all people eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program.

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.

In FFY 2020, for Title I, Part B Vocational Rehabilitation, SBVI anticipates a total of 534 eligible citizens will be served at a case service cost of \$1,392,858.

In FFY 2021, for Title I, Part B Vocational Rehabilitation, SBVI estimates 535 eligible citizens will be served at a case service cost of \$1,374,858.

## I. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

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

The South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) mission is to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment and independent living outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. To accomplish this mission, the Board of SBVI (State Rehabilitation Council) and the Division of SBVI jointly developed the goals listed below in cooperation with core partners identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Information from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment was also used in the development of these goals.

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

Goal 1: Improve earnings, benefits, and career advancement for clients served by SBVI.

Goal 2: Work with workforce programs and other partners so that referral sources, employers, and citizens who are blind or visually impaired are aware of the unique services provided by SBVI.

Goal 3: Ensure that Vocational Rehabilitation clients receive services that allow for informed choice and help them to improve their ability to communicate, interact, and perform to their potential in their community.

Goal 4: Strengthen the agency's ability to provide quality services to minority populations in South Dakota.

Goal 5: Provide quality transition services to eligible students that facilitate their movement from school to post-secondary education and/or optimal employment outcomes.

### **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;**

The goals were developed based on the analysis of comprehensive statewide needs assessment and public input.

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

The goals were developed based on SBVI meeting performance accountability measures 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.**

RSA monitoring review reports, annual report cards, client satisfaction survey responses and other relevant information is shared with the Board of SBVI for consideration in developing goals, priorities and strategies for SBVI service delivery.

All relevant information was considered and shared with the Board of SBVI when developing goals, priorities and strategies.

## **m. Order of Selection**

Describe:

### **1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:**

#### **A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services**

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is able to serve all eligible individuals and is not on an order of selection.

#### **B. The justification for the order**

N/A

### C. The service and outcome goals

N/A

D. Time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order; and

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

### 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

South Dakota SBVI no longer receives an annual allotment of Title VI—B funds. The South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation services are made available on a statewide basis to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have not traditionally been competitively employed or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent. These services are available through the Supported Employment Program. Because SBVI does not receive a federal supported employment allotment, these services are provided through using basic vocational rehabilitation funds.

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

South Dakota SBVI no longer receives an annual allotment of Title VI-B funds. Due to the reporting burden with the requirements for matching and tracking Title VI-B funds, SBVI will serve individuals with the most significant disabilities through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Youth with the most significant disabilities will have access to Project Skills, paid work experiences, Project Search

and other opportunities. Extended services will be available from SBVI for youth with the most significant disabilities for up to 4 years with other entities providing long term supports after that time period.

## **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.**

Medicaid waiver funds are available for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities. In addition, the public-school system offers options for expanded supported employment opportunities.

## **o. State's Strategies**

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

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

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired established goals and strategies to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive jobs in the labor market, increasing self-sufficiency, personal independence, and full inclusion into the community. The goals were developed as a result of the information compiled from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, and strategies listed below are key steps in accomplishing those goals:

Strategy 1.1: Increase utilization of South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to improve skills of clients served, including alternative techniques and vocational services.

Strategy 1.2: Maintain and emphasize the quality of job development services to SBVI clients by providing specialty training on blindness and visual impairments to providers.

Strategy 1.3: Expand the use of Integrated Resource Teams to address the broad array of needs for those with significant disabilities.

Strategy 2.1: Design and disseminate outreach materials and participate in activities that target employers to educate them on the capabilities of people who are blind or visually impaired.

Strategy 2.2: Annually conduct activities that promote services for citizens with vision loss including those from minority backgrounds.

Strategy 2.3: Annually review and update outreach materials and procedures that staff utilize to promote services to referral sources, employers and other entities.

Strategy 3.1: Develop assistive technology training resources to improve accessibility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with the most significant disabilities.

Strategy 3.2: Collaborate with workforce programs and other partners to ensure essential life supports are in place so SBVI clients have the skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment.

Strategy 3.3: Ensure access to specialized skills training by trained/certified providers.

Strategy 3.4: Improve access to peer supports and behavioral health supports to address life conditions of those with visual impairments and blindness.

Strategy 4.1: Coordinate with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and workforce programs to plan educational activities on norms, beliefs and values of minority populations.

Strategy 4.2: Collaborate with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to ensure that all eligible individuals are served in an effective and efficient manner on reservations and tribal lands.

Strategy 4.3: Inform minority populations of vocational rehabilitation services and the role of SBVI to meet the needs of those who are blind or visually impaired in these populations.

Strategy 5.1: Continue transition activities and services, such as Project Skills, Project Search, Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, and SBVI Transition Week, which provide students with valuable experiences and skills development needed to move from school to employment.

Strategy 5.2: Develop strategies with the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Transition Specialist to provide statewide education to teachers, students and family members about services available to students through SBVI.

## 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

SBVI makes assistive technology available to rehabilitation clients throughout the rehabilitation process. It is typical for SBVI to expend 25 percent of the VR case service budget on assistive technology (AT) devices and services each year. To ensure clients are assessed for their individualized needs, the state's assistive technology project, DakotaLink, provides AT services on a fee for service basis with certified technologists located across the state. An Assistive Technology Specialist is housed at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to provide intensive AT training and technical assistance. While providing one on one and classroom training, the AT specialist is also available to offer technical assistance via e-mail, phone, Skype and other modes to assist VR clients with their AT questions. In addition, SBVI has a variety of programs to meet assistive technology needs of citizens with vision loss who meet eligibility requirements for the older blind program. The Assistive Technology Advisory Committee of the Board of SBVI addresses assistive technology by meeting and bringing recommendations to the full board.

SBVI will expand assistive technology training resources to improve accessibility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with the most significant disabilities. Assistive technology services and devices will be available throughout the rehabilitation process through SBVI vocational rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers or private providers. These services are available on a statewide basis.

## 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

According to the 2010 census, South Dakota's minority (non-white) population was 14.1 percent. The largest minority group in South Dakota involves American Indians from nine South Dakota Tribes

making up 8.8 percent (2010 U.S. Census) of the state's total population. Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who serve each of the reservation areas. These VR Counselors meet with local Indian Health Services and tribal government staff to identify potential referrals. VR counselors have been welcomed to work out of tribal offices when meeting with applicants/clients living on the reservation. With a 70%-80% unemployment rate on our reservations, South Dakota is fortunate to have five American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs (AIVRS). These programs have greatly improved access to vocational rehabilitation services for those Native Americans served by these AIVRS Programs. The Division has established an on-going working relationship with each of the programs. Native American clients living on reservations have the choice of either being served by the AIVRS, the state unit or jointly by both programs. We encourage clients to be served either by the AIVRS Program or jointly by both projects. The AIVRS Programs have a better grasp of the cultural and service delivery barriers that exist on reservations. SBVI has access to specialized programs and services which are not feasible for an AIVRS Program to maintain. On those reservations where an AIVRS Program exists, SBVI will focus its outreach activities to network with the AIVRS Programs to ensure that Native American clients have access to the full range of vocational rehabilitation services. SBVI has a formal cooperative agreement with each AIVRS Programs.

Outreach activities that target businesses to educate them on the capabilities of people who are blind or visually impaired will include: annually conduct activities that promote services available for citizens with vision loss including those from minority backgrounds; annually review and update outreach materials and procedures that staff utilize to promote services to referral sources, employers and other entities; ensure that outreach methods address the needs of those with the most significant disabilities; maintain regular contact with minority service agencies to increase awareness of services that are available; collaborate with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation and other programs to ensure that all services are provided in an effective and efficient manner while addressing cultural diversity; provide SBVI staff with resources and training so they are able to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations; and strengthen extended services to assure successful employment for clients with the most significant disabilities.

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has Native American representation, which assists in providing guidance and consultation to the Division on policy issues affecting Native Americans.

#### **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)**

Continue transition activities and services including: Project Skills, Project Search, Youth Leadership Forum, SBVI Transition Week, and the Transition Services Liaison Project that provide students with pre-employment transition services. Provide summer Pre-ETS activities in communities statewide through agreements with local providers. Collaborate with the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and public schools to improve access to pre-employment transition services. Conduct outreach activities with teachers, students with disabilities, and their parents to provide information about SBVI services. Through a coordinated effort of systems, prepare youth with the knowledge, skills and ability to become economically self-sufficient. Educate teachers, students and family members about the services available through SBVI and other workforce partners. Increase the

provision of independent living and social skills training to ensure clients and youth have the skills required to obtain employment.

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

Increase utilization of South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to improve skills of SBVI clients, including alternative techniques and vocational services.

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

Expand the use of Integrated Resource Teams to address the broad array of needs for those with significant disabilities. Improve the quality of job development services by SBVI staff providing specialty training on employment and vision loss to providers and businesses. Access SSI/ SSDI benefits specialist's services and training to assist individuals with significant disabilities to manage their benefits while participating in employment.

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

Educate staff and clients on programs and services offered through other entities including the Department of Labor and Regulation, the South Dakota Department of Education and other public and private entities including the Veteran's Administration. Educate teachers, students and family members about the services available through SBVI and other workforce partners. SBVI will serve as a resource on accommodations for citizens with vision loss to other components of the statewide workforce system.

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

### **A. Achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;**

The Division of SBVI will work with the Board of SBVI to measure and report progress on goals and priorities, including those needs identified in the statewide needs assessment.

### **B. Support innovation and expansion activities; and**

Utilization of Innovation and Expansion Funds Section 101 (a) (18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to reserve and use a portion of the funds for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, with an emphasis on services to individuals with the most significant disabilities; and to support the funding of the State Rehabilitation Council (Board of SBVI).

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has reserved funds for utilization in innovation and expansion activities. These funds will be used for the following activities: Support the



costs of the Board of SBVI. This includes staff costs (drivers), accommodations and other direct costs involved in Board activities. Support initiatives approved by the Board of SBVI to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment, monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 and goals and priorities of the State. Areas of emphasis include the provision of assistive technology services and devices, services for students and youth with disabilities, improving community rehabilitation programs, working with businesses and employers to achieve and optimize employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals served by SBVI in conjunction with other core partners in the workforce system.

### **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.**

SBVI will address any barriers to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program. All SBVI offices are at accessible locations along bus routes, public meetings are held at locations that are physically accessible to people with disabilities, and accommodations are available upon request. Alternative formats are available for information (Braille, flash drive, large print, and auxiliary aids) and at events, as well as interpreters for deaf/hard of hearing or foreign language needs. The SBVI web page is accessible to individuals with disabilities who use accessibility software.

### **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**

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

The state unemployment rate affects achievement of goals and priorities. When the unemployment rate is low, there is a decrease in applicants for services. In addition, there has been a decrease in the number of individuals accessing assistive technology training at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. This may be due to iPhones and other technology being readily available with accessibility already built in. Vocational resources program at SDRC has also decreased, likely as a result of the low unemployment rate.

**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**

SBVI is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation services are made available on a statewide basis to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have not traditionally been competitively employed or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent. SBVI does not receive a supported employment Title VI Part B allotment. Instead, Title I vocational rehabilitation funds are authorized to providers of the client's choice; the amount of funds authorized is based upon the individual's needs, type of placement, hours, and type of employment.

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

All goals were achieved in PY 2018 and all strategies contributed to achieving the goals are outlined. There were no factors that impeded the achievement of goals.

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

Baseline measures have not been developed to address performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. However, SBVI has compiled two years of data on WIOA performance measures. This data will be evaluated, and performance measures will be negotiated with RSA to implement a baseline to report to RSA.

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program; 45.45% in PY17, 62.32% in PY18.
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program; Data not available in PY17, 41.92% in PY18.
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program; \$3,969.16 in PY17, \$4,138.85 in PY18.
4. The percentage of program participants who obtained a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program. For those participants who obtained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, the participant must also have obtained or retained employment or be in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within 1 year after exit from the program; 20% in PY17, 13.13% in PY18.
5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; 53.85% in PY17, 20.18% in PY18.
6. The indicator(s) of effectiveness in serving employers. Data not yet available.

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

The Rehabilitation Act requires that a portion of funds be reserved for innovation and expansion activities. The Division of SBVI works with the Board to prioritize these activities. The Board of SBVI utilizes the Division senior secretary for support of Board activities due to the limited resources available for personnel. Activities supported by the Board of SBVI in PY 2018 were as follows: 1: Costs associated with Board Member attendance at quarterly meetings; 2: Public Meeting promotion and facilitation (to gather input on the need to expand services, especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities); 3: Client Satisfaction Surveys; 4. Joint activities with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council; 5: National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities; 6: Workshop registration and travel expenses for Board Members attendance at agency training, and client conventions; 7: Education and outreach to promote the capabilities of citizens with vision loss and services offered by SBVI; 8: Workshop registration and travel expenses for clients' attendance at state conventions of client organizations; 9: Other activities approved by the Board of SBVI to address agency goals and strategies.

Board members participate in prioritizing innovation and expansion activities which impact citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Innovation and expansion funds are used in accordance with priorities in the Rehabilitation Act as amended.

## q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Include the following:

### 1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) provides services to individuals with the most significant disabilities including youth with the most significant disabilities who require intensive support to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. The services are designed to meet the current and future needs of these individuals whose disabilities are of such a nature that they need continuous, on-going support and extended services in order to engage in and maintain gainful employment. SBVI provides services including evaluation, assessment, job matching, job development, job placement, job coaching, and training for natural supports including extended services and other comprehensive follow along supports.

Ensuring that quality supported employment (SE) services are being provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities in South Dakota is a priority for the Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. SBVI works in collaboration with the South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to ensure the supported employment services incorporate key values such as self-determinism, informed choice, person-centered supports, quality of life, and full inclusion.

SBVI and DRS provide training to VR counselors and supported employment service providers to ensure quality services. The South Dakota Center for Disabilities provides training for supported employment service providers in South Dakota through an agreement with vocational rehabilitation.

Divisions of DRS and SBVI implemented a 25% higher reimbursement rate to supported employment service providers who obtain a Certified Employment Support Professional credentials and participate in a two-day person-centered planning training. In addition, the Divisions sponsor and arrange trainings to help service providers improve their service ability and maintain their continued education credits.

In September of 2018, SBVI began receiving training from Griffin-Hammis Associates for Customized Employment training to vocational rehabilitation counselors, supervisors and employment service providers to increase knowledge and expertise in service delivery to better meet the needs of individuals with more significant limitations to employment. This will make available a new kind of service that will allow staff to personalize the job search and placement process resulting in increased successful outcomes for those who could not be served or who were not well served by more traditional services in the past.

## 2. The timing of transition to extended services

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (DRS and SBVI) provide time—limited services needed to support an individual in employment. Vocational Rehabilitation can fund up to 24 months of follow along services unless the Individual Plan for Employment indicates that more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transitioning to extended services. For individuals who are youth with the most significant disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation can fund a maximum of 48 months of job coaching and follow-along services.

Prior to the purchase of supported employment services, the need for the services, the appropriate extended services and funding, and the appropriate agency for service provision are established and identified on the IPE. The transition to the extended services (long term funding source) occurs when 18 months of job coaching and follow along services have been provided or earlier if the following three requirements are met: The individual's employment is stable; The individual has met the hourly goal of employment established in the IPE; and the extended services are immediate without any interruption in the provision of the ongoing services to maintain employment.

If the IPE indicates that more than 24 months of services are necessary for the individual to achieve job stability, the time-limited services of job coaching and follow along can exceed 24 months. After the individual has transitioned to extended employment, the individual must maintain employment for at least 90 days prior to case closure.

## Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) Certifications

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA[14], and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act[15];

Enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency)[16] agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[17] , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[18] , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

Enter the name of designated State agency

South Dakota Department of Human Services

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[19] , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[20] , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

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

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

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

7. The (enter the name of authorized representative below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

Enter the name of authorized representative below

Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, Department Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Human Services

8. The (enter the title of authorized representative below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;

Enter the title of authorized representative below

Department Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Human Services

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

## Footnotes

[14] Public Law 113-128.

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

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

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

[18] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations.

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

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

## Certification Signature

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Shawnie Rechtenbaugh
Title of Signatory	Department Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Human Services
Date Signed	February 25, 2020

## Assurances

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

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	

The State Plan must include	Include
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	Yes
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	



The State Plan must include	Include
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported	

The State Plan must include	Include
employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

## Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Blind)

### Performance Indicators

#### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

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

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A "baseline" indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a

result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level	
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	
Measurable Skill Gains	43.7%		44.8%		
Effectiveness in Serving Employers					Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

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