**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Update**

**VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core State Plan Programs**

**Divisionb for the Blind and Visaully Impaired**

**Program Years 2022 and 2023**

# a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

a. 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;**

**Current Narrative:**

**Report of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

SRC Involvement in Planning and Evaluating includes Statewide Focus Groups, Performance Data, and Customer Satisfaction Information. The SRC meets in-person every other month and holds executive meetings on the alternate months. The entire SRC and DBVI staff meet for an all-day combined meeting each June.

**Highlights of SRC meetings for2020 and 2021**

**2020**

**The SRC began the** year with an SRC meeting in November 2019 that included important partner updates. These included representatives from the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, Special Services Library, Parent Family Network, Client Assistance Program, and the Association for the Blind. These updates are intended to keep the partners connected and informed about important initiatives.

The meeting also included a presentation from DBVI Staff about DBVI services. This agenda item was requested by the SRC to give new members a picture of the types of services that are provided. The first DBVI Counselor gave an overview of services that included:

* The importance of building a strong relationship with clients and being able to connect one-to-one.
* Keeping the focus on employment.
* Working together to discover employment goals and strengths.

The DBVI Technology Trainer also presented about the importance of technology and technology training. He described the technology evaluation and goal setting process which included:

* The process for referrals.
* Described the training available for a variety of accessible technology including screen readers and screen enlargement software.
* Training is Individualized and DBVI Counselors can have input on the content for instructional sessions.
* An explanation about working with college students which usually includes:
* Understanding how to navigate the various aspects of academics on college learning platforms.
* How to get books
* Signing up for services
* Look at course schedule and technology needs.
* Work with student services

At the December 2019 SRC meeting planning continued for completing year three of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

The following DBVI Goals were discussed to give overall context for the services provided by DBVI. They include goals for:

* Economic Independence.
* Building Adaptive Skills (Assistive Technology, Low-Vision, O+M, Rehab Teaching).
* Deliver Service Products Well and Assist Individuals to Become Better Off.
* Program Growth.

Overview of the CSNA Timeline:

* Dec. 2019 (Discussion with the SRC about DBVI Goals).
* February and April 2020 (Continue planning with the SRC).
* June 2020 (Hold a combined meeting with the SRC, DBVI Staff and key Partners to discuss Needs).
* Conduct Summer Surveys of Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Adult Service Providers.
* Sept. 2020 (Hold a Consumer-Driven Event).
* October 2020 (Hold White Cane Events).
* December 2020 (Initiate a statewide consumer satisfaction survey by Market Decisions).
* October 2020-Feb. 2021 (Revise DBVI Goals and Strategies with SRC input).

The SRC shared Ideas and possible Needs about the core services provided by DBVI:

* Evaluations and referrals.
* Public Education Events.
* Consumer Driven Events.
* Adjustment Therapy Sessions.
* VABVI Eval and Lessons.
* Adaptive Equipment and Eval and Lessons.
* Information and Answers.
* Expectations and Communication Products.
* Employment Guidance/Counseling Sessions.
* Progressive Employment Placements.

The SRC emphasized the importance of assistive technology training and the increasing needs for people using IOS devices. They also encouraged DBVI and the SRC to place an emphasis on public education and transportation needs.

The SRC provided input about the WIOA Performance Measures that include:

* Job retention six months post program exit.
* Job retention twelve months post program exit.
* Median earnings six months post program exit.
* Credential attainment.
* Measurable skills gains.
* Employer satisfaction.

The SRC feels strongly that there should be more opportunities for credential attainment and apprenticeships for people who are blind or visually impaired.

In February 2020, the DBVI Director met with the SRC. He reviewed the Sections of the state plan updates. There was a continued discussion and concern that people who are blind or visually impaired are being left behind with apprenticeships and other DOL opportunities because the job duties are usually visual in nature and often require a driver’s license. The DBVI Director explained the idea of working with CCV to create a course about Customer Service. There was support for this idea.

The SRC reviewed the updated sections of the State Plan 2020. The Goals and Priorities include:

* DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.
* Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
* Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.
* DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.
* DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.
* In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in DOL programs.
* DBVI will improve the outcomes for students and youth.
* DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).
* DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.
* DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program’s services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

The SRC agrees with the priorities and added emphasis in some areas. They agreed with the importance of career assessments, building adaptive blindness skills, and focusing on assistive technology training. The SRC would also like to see more apprenticeship and career training opportunities for consumers like the one being explored for customer service at CCV. There is also strong support for DBVI helping the DOL Career One Stop to become more accessible.

\*The State Plan was submitted with SRC Approval in March 2020.

In April 2020, the SRC meeting included many partner updates because it was the first meeting after the state shut down due to the virus. Each agency took turns explaining the steps they have taken to provide services virtually. Some highlights include:

VABVI

* Suspension of in-person services. Everyone working from home.
* Using phone calls and video calls to provide services.
* Still ordering aids and appliances
* Students are still being served as part of their IEP plans.
* Had to lay off drivers.
* Had to lay off rehab teaching assistants.

Agency of Education

* Initial Guidance for Schools.

* + <https://education.vermont.gov/news/covid-19-guidance-vermont-schools>
* Transition assessments for students during remote learning.

<https://education.vermont.gov/documents/implementing-transition-services-during-remote-learning>

Vermont Council of the Blind

* Cancelled their fall trip.

LEAP Program

* Doing weekly retreats via Zoom that work on employability skills.
* Weekly themes for lesson plans including examples such as motivational speakers, business owners, etc.

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

* The staff have made a successful shift to working and providing services in a virtual environment.

The SRC brainstormed ideas about the combined June meeting with the SRC and DBVI Staff. Ideas included:

* Holding the meeting by Zoom.
* Have guest speakers from partner organizations.
* How are people doing their jobs in a virtual environment using assistive technology?
* How are students adapting to virtual learning?

In June 2020, the SRC and DBVI staff had a virtual combined meeting to discuss “The Future of Remote Work and Possible Opportunities for People who are Blind or Visually Impaired.” Discussion and Needs Assessment Questions included:

* How can your agency help blind and visually impaired individuals with remote work?
* What does the future hold now that remote work has become a new normal?
* What are everyone’s experiences?

Many ideas were generated by the group and there was full agreement that there will be more opportunities for remote work.

Some possible remote work opportunities include:

* Chittenden County hospitals are creating some remote positions.
* UVM Medical Center has remote positions. Hospitals moving to more remote work.
* The Sales Force company will be converting 50% of their positions to remote work.
* Many customer service positions have moved to remote platforms. For example, Wal-Mart, Target, etc. These positions will remain remote as companies are recognizing that they need to stay remote.
* Staffing agencies are a good resource for identifying companies that are creating a remote workforce.
* There is a training program in Indiana for a 16-to-18-week program to become an admin for Sales Force. The technology is accessible and an article in Access World provides detail.
* Amazon recently settled a case that they will make their customer service positions accessible.
* Apple is creating more remote customer service positions.

The SRC and DBVI Staff Discussed the following Needs Assessment Topics:

* There was a strong interest for DBVI to continue the Annual Great Expectations consumer-driven event.
  + - DBVI will plan some virtual consumer events for fall 2020 and include Needs Assessment questions as part of each session
    - DBVI will have a strong focus on Career inventories. This will help consumers to learn more about their interests and abilities.
    - The main inventories will include:

World of work inventory;

Virtual Job Shadow; and

Career One Stop.

* The Vermont Family Network has a comprehensive student transition toolkit on their website that is very helpful to students and families.

Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) Update for summer 2020:

There will be 3 summer programs for students beginning July 6th. They are:

* The Vermont Family Network has a comprehensive student transition toolkit on their website that is very helpful to students and families.
* Technology Challenge;
* Choose Your Own Adventure; and
* Work-based learning program

The meeting also included a guest speaker, April Shaw, from the Department of Libraries. Her presentation included an explanation and demonstration of the employment related resources on the “Learning Express” platform. The service is free for all Vermonters and includes many courses including:

* Career Preparation.
* Job and career accelerator.
* Tutorials for resume building, cover letters, etc.
* Descriptions of different careers.
* Practice Tests.
* Details about careers.
* Resources for College Students.
* Adult Core Skills.
* Video courses on computer skills.
* Spanish speaking lessons.
* Accessible on all devices.
* Works with voiceover.
* Can do career assessments.
* Linked to Indeed.com

In September 2020, the DBVI Director met with the SRC Executive Committee to do final planning for the virtual Needs Assessment events. It was agreed to hold two events as described below:

Please plan to join DBVI for the “Vermont DBVI Employment Awareness Summit. “This will be a virtual event held on October 26th and November 9th from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. This will be a facilitated discussion about finding ways to match our unique strengths and talents to meet Vermont employer needs. The agenda will include some activities to help us feel encouraged and empowered as we learn about Vermont’s current and future Labor Information.

This event is for everyone who believes that individuals who are blind or visually impaired have unique strengths and talents that can meet Vermont employer needs.

Here is a link to a YouTube [video from Fred Jones, DBVI Director, with more details and goals for the event](https://youtu.be/Q-dMXeylAfg).

<https://youtu.be/Q-dMXeylAfg>

The Agenda for October 26th included:

1. Opening:

* Fred Jones, DBVI Director, will welcome the participants.
* David DeNotaris will introduce himself and his role as facilitator.

David is a national Consultant, Speaker, Author, and Trainer. Here is a link to his [TED Talk](https://youtu.be/ESQZl7lsZQE) .

<https://youtu.be/ESQZl7lsZQE>

1. Subject:

* “Let’s Find ways to match our unique strengths and talents to meet Vermont employer needs.”

1. Agenda Topics:

* Some activities to help us feel encouraged and empowered.
* Learn about Employer Needs (Labor Market Information—from Kevin Stapleton—Vermont Department of Labor).

1. Agenda:

* Group advocacy activity, what gets your goat?
* ABC’s of blindness.
* Confidence discussion, if you don’t believe in yourself, who will?
* Labor Market Information Presentation by Kevin Stapleton from Vermont Department of Labor.
* Group brainstorming activity: How many of those jobs could a blind person do anyway?
* You don’t have to be brilliant to be resilient, bouncing forward!

1. Summary of Key Points:

* David DeNotaris will summarize the agenda activities and discussions.

1. Main Idea:

* Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in Vermont have unique strengths and talents to meet Vermont employer needs.

1. Next Steps:

* Ask participants to continue the discussion using Google Groups.

The Agenda for November 9th included:

Matching Strengths with Employer Needs

Fred Jones (DBVI Director):

Welcomes everyone.

Opening remarks, “All of us are leaders and path finders to discover strategies to match our strengths to meet Vermont business needs.

David DeNotaris (National Consultant):

Summarize themes from the listserv discussion.

-Share other similar examples from personal or consulting work that relates to the listserv theme discussions.

Kevin Stapleton (Economist for the Vermont Department of Labor)

Share ideas about how we can all stay current with labor market trends and DOL initiatives.

-Q/A with Kevin about Vermont Labor Market Information

David DeNotaris:

Pathfinding Exercise to brainstorm ideas for:

-Create initiatives to educate employers,

-Find ways to market DBVI consumer strengths to compete for jobs,

-Find ways to demonstrate problem solving and critical thinking skills to employers,

-Form job clubs,

Both days of the Employment Summit events were well attended and included many great ideas.

The SRC looks forward to the upcoming year where DBVI participants are “Better Off” with improved circumstances and services are delivered well.

**2021 Summary of SRC Meetings**

The SRC began the year in February 2021 with a virtual meeting to provide important partner updates and to get SRC input on DBVI Goals, Priorities, and Strategies. The highlights of the updates include:

* The first DBVI Counselor has enrolled in Vision Specialist Training through Mississippi State.
* The Client Assistance Program representative has been doing work for general VR program – policies and procedures updates and plans to do the same with DBVI policies.
* The Vermont Council of the Blind are beginning to create virtual groups to work on crafts, movie nights, and speakers to help people who are feeling isolated.
* The ABLE special services library is recruiting for a new librarian for special populations.
* The Business Enterprise Program currently has 2 of the 3 cafes closed to the public. One site is still functional – as a catering service for the state laboratories. This has helped keep the individuals at the cafe employed. This also has continued to allow the cafes to be a training site for DBVI consumers. Hoping that by the end of the summer, they can open the sites back up again.
* The Learn, Earn, and Prosper program is still running virtual programs every week. They developed social media work experience for some individuals. LEAP will not have residential program this summer – but will work with students in their respective communities to find work-based learning opportunities for the summer.
* The Agency of Education secondary transition AOE website has been revamped. It has the graduation readiness tool 🡪 helps the team put in place things that need to be done for transition planning. New form in IEP for transition planning. This was modeled from other states that are having very good transition outcomes. For example, more in-depth transition assessment 🡪 the special educator is looking at student strengths, interests, etc. so they can assist in building good goals. AOE has been doing a lot of training with special educators on new forms.
* The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired referrals are staying consistent. Have seen an uptick in referral from doctors likely due to VABVI’s outreach efforts.
* VABVI received grant last year (July-December) to increase SMART device support to decrease social isolation among users. Receiving good feedback from users about the success of training in combating social isolation. Hoping to receive funds to continue these services.
* For children’s services, VABVI has been able to continue services for most students throughout COVID. Couldn’t fill all the teacher positions, which increases workload for current teachers. There are two students enrolled in the UMass program that they may be able to recruit for positions next year.

**Goals and Priorities Discussion**

Input from the SRC included:

**Strategy 3**

* For employer outreach and engagement, is it possible to put together a video? What tools is DBVI using now for employer outreach for blind and visually impaired workers?
* DBVI does benefit from VABVI’s outreach efforts. We also have a project in a pilot-phase to use Front Porch Forum to reach potential consumers that are not aware of DBVI services. On March 19, DBVI has time reserved with Business Account Managers to discuss strategies for them to promote the employment of people with visual impairments to employers. On April 16, we are going to have David Denotraris facilitate a discussion with BAMs on how to engage businesses.
* Vermont Legal Aid has used Front Porch Forum with success to disseminate information to people.
* Consider the possibility of doing an outreach video as a tool for BAMs and employers.
* Reach out to individuals that losing a CDL due to vision loss 🡪 these individuals don’t know where to turn.

**Strategy 5**

* Includes serving underserved communities. What is DBVI currently doing to support these populations?
* A DBVI Counselor gave an update of diversity and inclusion task force that she is participating in on behalf of DBVI. Both looking internally (ex. hiring practices) and how we can support underserved populations throughout the state.

**strategy 10**

* What is DBVI doing about transportation issues.
* DBVI is connected with Tim Bradshaw and Ross McDonald. The Vermont Partnership of transportation providers (Elaine Haytko) has been a resource in finding direct transportation support for our consumers. DBVI will do some research to see how the MyRide program is doing in Montpelier.

**On April 16, 2021, DBVI and some SRC members had a meeting with Vermont’s Business Account Managers (BAM).**

These individuals work with businesses and help create employment matches for people with disabilities. The purpose for this meeting was to educate the BAMs about blindness and employment. This was a virtual event that included a presentation from David Denotaris who is a national expert in this field. Theis resulted in a great discussion between DBVI staff and BAMs about specific strategies that can be used to help DBVI consumers find employment.

**On April 22, 2021, the SRC met virtually to discuss the results of the survey completed with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired.**

**Action Items:**

* DBVI will connect with the Developmental Disabilities program specialist about who we should get connected with to talk about supported college programs
* DBVI will revisit the possibility of creating job clubs.
* DBVI and he SRC will brainstorm ways that we can provide education to parents.

**Updates**

* VABVI children’s services: two vacant positions will be filled starting next school year with individuals who are completing training at UMass. VABVI summer camp will be happening virtually this year in collaboration with VABVI. Camp will be focusing on providing training on the development of independent living skills.
* Adult services: referrals have stayed consistent. VABVI is continuing to do services following strict safety guidelines.
* Volunteer driving program is down in numbers considerably. VABVI is working on doing recruitment for these positions.
* VABVI has done some website updates to feature new tab that includes all the instruction videos.
* The technology fair has been happening virtually this year (two more are scheduled for next week).
* Dan and Steve involved in a couple national programs looking to improve services for the blind and visually impaired individuals. They are participating in a group that will evaluate the positive outcomes of their program and develop a standardized assessment to evaluate services they provide.
* The ABLE library is currently looking at candidates to hire for new positions. They may start doing interviews the beginning of May. Sending out 250 books on partridges per day and 30 large print books per day – this has been a huge service during the pandemic. The library is doing very well.
* The AOE are currently engaged in target setting for the SPP/APR. We’re also currently working with Linda Moreno in assessment on a project to potentially procure Snap&Read (SnR) and Cowriter (CoW) accessibility tools which have some overlapping capabilities with Bookshare. RFPs for the statewide consultants are about to be completed so that will be something to look for early next month.
* The Client Assistance Program volunteered to help update DBVI policies. DBVI reported that they have a standard approach of reviewing policy every 3 years. We took advantage of some of the virtual time, and we went through each policy as a group. Next steps are for CAP to review updated policies and then give the SRC the opportunity to weigh in. This will likely be a project for the summer/early fall.
* CAP also offered to meet with staff to see how CAP can support DBVI and consumers served. Possibility of attending a statewide staff meeting. If you are having trouble with consumers accessing AT (ex. dispute over who is supposed to pay for what, something that Medicaid might cover, etc.) the disability law project might be able to help as well.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Vermont will be having annual convention on May 1. The president will be on the agenda. A UVM representative working on supported employment will also be present. DBVI will help to advertise this event.
* The Vermont Council of the Blind convention will be happening April 30, 10-12, event will be happening virtually. Speaker from ABLE and VABVI.
* DBVI reported that they did receive technical assistance grant opportunity for 5 years. This grant is for technical assistance for creating apprenticeship programs in rural areas. This will help and connecting us with other states, providing collaboration, etc. Ideas for apprenticeships being more virtual/remote. We will be working with UMass Boston on this. Also, DBVI submitted grant application with five other states (Michigan is lead agency) – focusing on high wage jobs for consumers. There will be people at the national level that can identify companies that are hiring, identify training programs to help individuals prepare and compete in this type of employment, and develop ideas regarding how AT will work with these types of positions. A big focus of this will be remote work which will allow more crossover between states. There are no matching requirements. Hopefully, we will know by June meeting.

**TVI Conversation/Discussion:**

* Maybe we should have more opportunities with voctech programs? Technology is also mentioned quite a bit as an important area for youth to be proficient in.
* Learn, Earn, and Prosper update: Providing a lot of virtual work experience programs (ex. social media intern at VCIL). Virtual work experience doesn’t necessarily work for more entry-level students. LEAP is working with DBVI, VABIR, VABVI to provide work experiences for students in their community. LEAP has strong partnerships in the Burlington region – this will be an opportunity to expand relationships. The students will be paid $12/hour. Coordinating to provide a STEM experience for students. Hoping to continue a virtual type of experience moving forward to give students who don’t want to participate in the Burlington/dorm experience. Typically, LEAP is a six-week residential program in Burlington. Students stay at dorm at St. Michael’s college. Students attend for 3-6 weeks. They gain beneficial independent living skills and social skills.
* LEAP will be also partnering with UVM Physics Department to coordinate STEM program.
* CAP: From experience in Special Education, the Tech centers are not the most welcoming places for students with disabilities. The tech centers have worked hard to solidify themselves within the constellation of educational opportunities. It may be beneficial to do some outreach and education regarding how students can participate safely. There might be some significant advocacy on DBVI’s end to have tech centers welcome blind/VI students.
* SRC: Does LEAP provide support in how to appropriately communicate with employers?
* LEAP: Students are provided this type of feedback regularly. Example: the tone you use while speaking to supervisor, the difference between communicating with peers and supervisors.
* SRC: What is the possibility of exploring specific training program for technical skills (small engine repair used to be offered through Lion’s World). Coordinating with TVI may also be helpful.
* SRC: Had an experience supporting student in voctech program – education to the directors of these programs regarding how DBVI can partner to support the student in these programs.
* DBVI will connect with statewide VocTech Directors.
* SRC: if the issues are funding – that is a 504/IEP involvement, not an excuse for a student not to participate.
* LEAP: something that stood out in this year’s TVI results, was the need for social skill development. This is something that we want to be mindful of when we transition back to in-person services. A lot of time has been lost due to COVID. It has been a very challenging year for some students. Some students have been choosing to be virtual when they can participate in person.
* SRC: One way that you could expand on LEAP 🡪 compass program, Project Succeed, it might be worth exploring expanding those programs for blind and visually impaired individuals.
* DBVI will connect with Developmental Disabilities program specialist about who we should get connected with to talk about supported college programs.
* DBVI: students need to be comfortable with interview skills. Discussing how they are going to get to work, how they are going to excel in the job. Work on building confidence. Developing resume.
* SRC: going through the interview process – understanding the process. What is the purpose of the cover letter? Understanding all these aspects of the process is important.
* DBVI will revisit the possibility of job clubs.
* SRC: Resource has launched three virtual job programs. Would love someone to see if those would be a good fit for DBVI consumers. Each student gets an individual instructor (AmeriCorps members) that provide individualized support.
* SRC: Hadley also has some great, free technical courses
* DBVI: In May DBVI staff will be reviewing the Hadley website and courses.
* DBVI: The importance of interest inventories/career opportunities. Most assessments in the past have been done paper and pencil. A lot of them are transitioning online and many of them are accessible. Career Index Plus and Virtual Job Shadow are two that we’ve explored.
* SRC: how much do we involve/provide education to parents on how they can help their kids get ready for employment?
* DBVI and the SRC will discuss ways they can provide more education for parents about employment.
* SRC: education around working and receiving benefits. Parents may be afraid of losing benefits if they enter the workforce. It may be beneficial to touch base with Vermont Family Network on this.
* SRC (Department of Labor): Virtual Job Fair every Thursday, Regional Employment connections, resumes/cover letters, employment strategies, interviewing skills, labor market information…done as group and then can do individual if requested…sign up available on website.

**The June 24, 2021, meeting was a combined meeting with the SRC, LEAP Students, and DBVI staff.**

The Icebreaker activity was hosted by LEAP Students in virtual breakout rooms.

LEAP Student Leaders used a series of student designed questions to start the friendly dialogue. When the breakout rooms closed, students and participants returned to the main room and share out what they learned about each other in the breakout rooms.

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| **Breakout Rooms – LEAP Student Facilitators facilitated a discussion on mentorship & transition needs.**   1. **Mentors (30 minutes)**  * Who is an important mentor in your life and why? * Have you ever mentored anyone? What was that experience like? * What do you think is important for a successful mentor/mentee relationship? * What are the benefits of having a mentor? What are the benefits of having a mentee? * When is a time in your life you wish you had a mentor? * *Group Responsibility:* Each group defines the word *mentor* and shares their definition with the larger group * The group agrees on their definition, and a LEAP Student Leader identifies a volunteer to share with the larger group  1. **Student Survey Results (45 minutes)**   LEAP Staff distributed a survey to pre-employment transitional students to learn about their bright spots in 2020/21, and their needs for the future.  During the SRC meeting, LEAP Students Leaders facilitated discussion questions in break out rooms about the survey results. |

**October 28, 2021**

The meeting began with important partner updates.

* VABVI: Outreach presentations have been scheduled to reach opticians at UVM. Dan Norris presented on a cable access show and in New Hampshire. VABVI has partnered with White Cane Awareness Day events throughout the state. National collaboration with the Older Individuals Blindness Technical Assistance Division.
* VAVVI Children’s Services: Summer extended school year. While 18-20 students participated in the prior years, 43 students participated this summer, a 100% increase. The students worked on financial literacy skills, independent living skills, and self-determination skills, all skills defined in vocational rehabilitation services as pre-employment and transition services (Pre-ETS). The students also met with Karen Gravelin to increase awareness and access to braille and the audio download known as BARD. 10 students are involved at present. VABVI intends to double that over the next year. VABVI has participated in initial planning meeting with deaf/blind consortium. VABVI has four new employees and is glad to be fully staffed. Shelby Glass is now a full-time staff person.
* Vermont Family Network (VFN): highlighted the Interagency Core Team conference event. It was well attended. 250 people with great speakers and workshops. VFN recommends finding the Vermont Family Network page, click on Core Teams, and navigate to the bottom of the page, as recordings will be there. VFN put together a youth council at the event that included one student from LEAP. Core Transition Teams are always looking for members.
* SRC: The American Council of the Blind may be able to advocate and adds that Learning Ally concentrates on college books and textbooks.
* SRC: When you are trying to expand the resource and to get information out to the entities that do assessments, it would be beneficial to include the Stern Center for Language and Learning and others who do special education assessments.
* SRC: Listening to digitally recorded books helps increase reading speed, and comprehension levels. The application is easy to fill out.
* AOE: It would probably be good to present bookshare at regional special education directors’ meetings.
* SRC: The consumer organizations, National Federation of the Blind, and Council of the Blind need more contacts from students.
* SRC: I think we should connect. Youth like to access and attend in person. I would like to ask if there are internship opportunities also.
* CAP: Summer has been very busy, working on the general VR policy and procedures manual, going through chapters to ensure they are gender neutral. DBVI policy and procedures. CAP will be getting to this shortly. CAP referenced the number of different initiatives within the general VR agency.
* CAP: We are about to get a new director for the Disability Law Project as Nancy Briedan is retiring. Rachel Kelig will be the new project director. CAP wants to look at our outreach and how to increase outreach. With regards to the general VR program, and the satisfaction survey, we reach the younger and older populations, but individuals in the 30s to 50s are more challenging to access. We are also looking to organize the text so that it is most helpful to DVR. As we begin to work on the DBVI policies to ensure they are respectful of gender identities, it is helpful that all DBVI policies were done at one time. Right now, in the regular DVR agency, transportation is a hot button issue.
* AOE: Vermont Agency of Education has conducted lots of trainings in the transition planning process. There is a new, intensive monitoring process that is streamlined with the technical assistance process and is very stringent. Some of this will be very new for educators. We have districts that have transition planning gurus, and there is concentrated training for high school special educators.
* DBVI update – The director thanks everyone for bringing their expertise and participation to DBVI’s Rehabilitation Council. The director reminds everyone that December 16th meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council is so important. We are going to start the statewide satisfaction survey with Market Decisions research. The meeting on December 16th is the first focus group where Market Decisions will facilitate and begin dialogue. How are things going with employment? What do you see as the needs? The meeting will be virtual, there may be some preliminary results or results from prior surveys.
* This year, DBVI did not receive the RSA collaborative apprenticeship grant. We will still meet with the five-state group to consider how we can still collaborate on expanding opportunities especially virtual possibilities. DBVI received the Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development Grant (RYAD). While not funded, it is a five-year learning collaborative that includes participants from Wyoming, Arkansas, and Vermont. Presenters have included Pennsylvania and Maine.
* DBVI believes that LEAP has been a successful model for consumers, and the employment and apprenticeship options will be the next level. Apprenticeships for the blind are different. Lots of states have exciting new directions but opportunities in apprenticeship, such as getting HVAC off the ground, are not the same opportunities that are needed by consumers within DBVI. We need to find certain sectors where apprenticeship may work more effectively. There may be collaborative directions that evolve with other states. The RYAD learning collaborative has offered a platform for discussion, dialogue, and training. Stay tuned on this. Apprenticeship may come up in our needs assessment. DBVI is assisting to put together the needs assessment. And we have a PhD level data and statistics analyst with DAIL who is looking at aggregate Medicaid data. How many people are receiving services with different eye conditions, identification of numbers and who is out there.
* The December SRC meeting will include a focus group discussion and in February we will discuss goals and strategies to be included in the DBVI state plan. In March DBVI submits the new State plan.
* Karen Gravlin – is the new Director of the ABLE Library, and the Library Consultant for Inclusive Services. Jason Broughton is the new director of the Library of Congress. Broughton recently testified in congress. The ABLE library is working on website re-design and new brochures. The library has had funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and will refresh the large print collection. Plan to make a more robust youth collection and to record audio versions of books of Vermont interest. Summer reading program is being planned, and ABLE library is promoting a mailing campaign to nursing homes to describe our services.
* LEAP update: LEAP had a different kind of summer this year than in the past. The pandemic affected LEAP programming in expansion of opportunities that are not residential. There are young people who would not have engaged with LEAP without these virtual opportunities. Schools have been more adaptive to allow kids to come to LEAP during in school hours. At the Overlook Café, the mentorship of an individual owning her own business and managing her staff has been a wonderful mentoring relationship for student participants. Out-of-state student participation has grown substantially. In 2019, 65 participants – in 2021, 153 participants. LEAP has secured a Gibney Family grant in 2022. Called LEAP Connect, it is an attempt to go national. Any student aged 15-25 who is blind or visually impaired in Vermont can attend at no cost to the student. Kaelyn describes that LEAP serves 15-20 students a year, and the career fields and interests are unique to individual students. For example, a young man who wants to go into mechanics, may not meet a peer with the same interest and direction. LEAP Connect may assist students who are in the same place in life, who can share and look ahead together. One of our Vermont students will know what it is like in California. Virtual opportunities are important – what we can’t miss is the opportunity to bring people together. They can’t learn in a vacuum. LEAP Connect runs from January to April. LEAP may reach out to ask members of the SRC to be a mentor.
* LEAP students prepared breakfast for White Cane Awareness Day and demonstrated leadership on that day. After serving breakfast to members of the community and cleaning the kitchen, six students guided 25 people to the Sidewalk Mural in Burlington. Tandem biking was offered at the Waterfront. Media coverage and a news clip of the Sidewalk mural that highlighted a national visually impaired musician, Grace Potter, was shared with the group. LEAP hopes to have the opportunity to bring Grace to speak directly with students.
* Two LEAP students presented about their experiences with LEAP:

“I work at the Café. I help plan the curriculum. I manage the LEAP Instagram account. I am learning about how to run a business. I am anticipating how to prepare to take on these challenges. LEAP has developed confidence in my abilities to make connections, plan a program and work on a team.”

“I am currently applying to graduate school including Tufts to study History and Museum Studies. [Through LEAP] I have an increased understanding in how non-profits work: managing budgets, student payroll, student timesheets. I have gained leadership abilities. I feel comfortable with how to set an agenda for a meeting, how to reach out to facilitators, how to make sure people are prepared for a meeting. I have a voice. I can put in my perspective, put in my thoughts on what we should do. I can better advocate for myself to get what I need to be successful. All of this will help me with the skills that I need when I get into grad school.”

* LEAP invites members of the State Rehabilitation Council to contact if they are aware of students who may like to participate in LEAP and LEAP Connect.

**December 16, 2021**

The December SRC meeting included a focus group facilitated by Market Decisions. The topics covered included:

* What do you think leads to clients having trouble communicating with DBVI staff?
* What do you think of the types of businesses DBVI works with?
* How does DBVI fit into your personal story??
* How do the people you talk to feel about VT DBVI services, in general?
* What limits DBVI’s ability to offer services to everyone who might benefit from them?
* What prevents clients from successfully closing out their cases?
* How can the process of getting services from DBVI be made easier?
* What additional tools or services would be helpful to improve DBVI’s services to clients?
* What are the most pressing needs of blind and visually impaired individuals that DBVI doesn’t currently address?
* What about DBVI services would you like to see change in the future?
* What is the best way to keep people and businesses informed about what DBVI can offer?
* What are ways to get more people to engage with DBVI services?

These questions prompted very thoughtful and meaningful discussion about DBVI services. The results will be shared at the February 2022 meeting along with the results of 2 other focus group discussions. The focus groups and needs assessment results will be used to update the DBVI goals and strategies.

The SRC looks forward to the upcoming year where DBVI participants are “Better Off” with improved circumstances and services are delivered well.

The public hearing was held on February 25, 2022 at the Waterbury State Office Complex (Ash Conference Room). No comments were submitted).

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

**sCurrent Narrative:**

DBVI Response to SRC Input:

DBVI and the SRC worked collaboratively to review the State Plan update including the Goals, Priorities, and Evaluation of Progress.

DBVI agrees with all the SRC suggestions that include:

-Creating educational materials including a video for employers about hiring people who are blind.

-Creating an educational opportunity for Business Account Managers and ask them to assist with DBVI employment efforts.

-Continuing to have a DBVI Counselor participate on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statewide task force. The groups will continue to explore internal hiring practices and how we can support underserved populations throughout the state.

-Continuing to collaborate with transportation providers and follow the results of new micro-transit programs.

->>>Add the results of the upcoming Feb. 24th SRC meeting>>>

The SRC reviewed and gave input on the DBVI State Plan in a full SRC meeting on February 24, 2022, as part of the WIOA Unified Plan.

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

**Current Narrative:**

DBVI agreed with all SRC recommendations.

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

## [1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development](#_1.__Data)

###### A. Qualified Personnel Needs

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

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) operates in the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) in the Agency of Human Services (AHS). DBVI employs 11 full-time positions. DBVI is organized to allow a structure for advancement within based on increased professional abilities, knowledge, leadership, improved services and outcomes.

In FFY 2020 DBVI Counselors served 244 clients and 246 FFY 2021. DBVI has sufficient VR Counselor capacity to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation clients. DBVI has four regional offices. The Burlington office has two vocational counselors and the Montpelier, Rutland and Springfield offices each have one vocational counselor.

A position of LEAP program Coordinator was added in FY2020 to provide increased capacity to serve Pre-ETS students year round and to support DBVI’s Business Enterprise Program.

Three Rehab Associate positions have divided administrative responsibilities to support the vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs in the northern and southern regions of the State of Vermont and provide administrative support to the Director. These three positions are supervised by the Director.

In FFY 2021 the Springfield office filled the vacant full-time Administrative Services Coordinator position with a third full-time Rehab Associate position. The Rutland office replaced a vacant full-time Rehabilitation Associate position in 2021.

Technology services are provided by the Blind Services Assistive Technology Coordinator and a contracted professional Rehabilitation Technology expert. The Assistive Technology Coordinator provides services for DBVI clients and covers the entire State. DBVI has two Employment Consultants. The employment consultants are contracted through VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation). Overall supervision is provided by the Division Director.

DBVI has a total of 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions headed by the division director. The breakdown of staff is as follows:

**Job Title Total positions Current Vacancies Projected Vacancies 5 years**

Director 1 0 0

LEAP Program Coordinator 1 0 0

Senior Rehabilitation

Counselor 1 0 0

Rehabilitation Counselor I 2 0 0

Rehabilitation Counselor II 2 0 0

Rehabilitation Associate I 2 0 0

Rehabilitation Associate II 1 0 0

Adaptive Technology

Coordinator 1 0 0

DBVI maintains a high level of performance. The current personnel structure is designed to ensure DBVI clients are well served, including those with significant disabilities, students and adults requesting vocational rehabilitation services. We have addressed the issue of Counselors retiring or leaving the field and staffing levels are sufficient. This is due in part to the way the DBVI program is structured, which allows for staff development and advancement. DBVI is proud of its prompt turn-around services and ability to quickly establish eligibility and develop plans for services.

###### B. Personnel Development

**A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program**;

Vermont has no accredited graduate school offering a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. To meet the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD) standards, a rehabilitation counselor needs either a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a master’s degree in a related field plus completion of four additional core rehabilitation courses. To help meet the requirement for education, Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, University of Southern Maine, Mississippi State University and Springfield College of Human Services have partnered to provide the required masters level courses to be CSPD qualified.

Personnel Development needs over the past two years have been addressed by our relationship with University of Southern Maine, UMass Boston and Mississippi State University. Additionally, training and supervision are provided under the guidance of a qualified rehabilitation counselor and/or Division Director. Training includes instruction regarding the implications of visual impairment and how to provide expert services for people who are visually impaired and seeking employment.

DBVI coordinates educational training with Charles Beracchio, EdD, CRC from the University of Southern Maine for the Master of Science program which requires students to take a total of fifty-four credit hours. After completion of the program, counselors have the required knowledge needed to work in the rehabilitation field. Classes focus on the medical and psychological aspects that surround people with disabilities in our society. The training teaches students how to promote equality and empower clients. Below is an outline of the program syllabus:

Core Courses (27 credits)

EDU 600 Research Methods and Techniques  
HCE 605 Psychological Measurement and Evaluation  
HCE 620 Fundamentals of Counseling Theories  
HCE 621 Fundamentals of Counseling Skills  
HCE 626 Group Process and Procedures  
HCE 627 Group Counseling Practicum  
HCE 668 Human Development  
HCE 690 Individual Counseling Practicum Seminar  
HCE 691 Individual Counseling Practicum Laboratory

Required Concentration Courses (24 credits)

HCE 510 Introduction to Rehabilitation Counseling and Service  
HCE 514  Psychiatric Rehabilitation: Evidence-based Practices and Treatment  
HCE 611 Medical and Psychological Aspects of Disability and Rehabilitation  
HCE 612 Multicultural Counseling: Social & Cultural Foundations of Helping Diverse Families       
HCE 615 Vocational Counseling and Placement in Rehabilitation  
HCE 619  Recovery-Oriented Origins of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practice  
HCE 642 Perspectives on Chemical Dependency  
HCE 686 Internship in Counselor Education (6 credits - 600 hours)

The Vision Specialist Program is a graduate certificate program for vision specialists in vocational rehabilitation through Mississippi State University. The program is supported by an RSA long-term training grant and consists of four graduate courses:

COE 6303 Rehabilitation of Persons who are Visually Impaired

COE 6323 Sensory Aids/Assistive Technology for Persons Who are Visually Impaired

COE 6313 Resources for Persons who are Visually Impaired

COE 8293 Special Project: Practicum

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

In 2020 and 2021, one associate counselor was enrolled in a master’s degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Southern Maine’s online, distance learning program funded by the RSA long-term training grant.

One rehabilitation counselor is enrolled at UMass Boston to complete the four required core rehabilitation courses.

One rehabilitation counselor II is enrolled in the Vision Specialist Certificate Program through Mississippi State University.

**The number of students who graduated during 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**.

One Associate Counselor completed an M.S. in Counseling with a concentration in Rehabilitation Counseling through the University of Southern Maine’s (USM) online, distance learning program funded by an RSA long-term training grant to USM in August 2021.

One Rehabilitation Counselor with a master’s degree completed two of the four required core rehabilitation courses: Vocational Assessment and Evaluation in 2020 and Job Placement in 2021 at UMass Boston.

One Rehabilitation Counselor II with a master’s degree completed the Vision Specialist Certificate Program through Mississippi University in October 2021.

## 2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

DBVI recruits qualified personnel through The University of Southern Maine, Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, and Springfield College of Human Services who have received a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. These graduates meet the highest standard of education and are able to obtain certification at the highest level for this field. DBVI also recruits qualified personnel in a related field such as Social Work, Special Education, School Guidance, Mental Health Counseling, or Community Mental Health Services from New England colleges by posting positions on internal employment pages of the various college websites. These candidates for counseling vacancies are considered if they are willing to complete the four core rehabilitation courses.

DBVI also recruits professionals with an expertise in rehabilitation and knowledge of visual diagnoses and the implications of visual disability. State personnel policies require DBVI to consider qualified applicants on the Reduction in Force list before other applicants. DBVI also advertises openings through the State recruitment system and through local newspapers. The state of Vermont is an equal opportunity employer and there is an emphasis on recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds to ensure a diverse qualified professional staff. DBVI also recruits interested and qualified consumers, both past and present, to provide services to Vermonters with vision impairments.

Rehabilitation Associates and Associate Counselors are recruited with a strong preference given to those with bachelor’s degrees and a strong commitment to blind services. Rehabilitation Associates or Associate Counselors with a bachelor’s degree are encouraged to take the CSPD required master’s level courses. They are encouraged to pursue a master’s level program in preparation for retention and promotion of qualified personnel. Through flexible work schedules and approved time off, DBVI makes it convenient for staff to pursue advanced degrees and education. DBVI supports staff members who want to further their relevant education.

DBVI supports staff and their professional development through public recognition and opportunities for job advancement through a developed career ladder within the division. New staff participate in comprehensive orientation and training that covers information appropriate to serving individuals who have vision loss as well as policy and procedure. Trainings address the implications of vision loss and services such as orientation and mobility, rehabilitation teaching, and low vision services. In addition, training and consultation occurs with our rehabilitation technology consultant on an ongoing basis. DBVI ensures a high standard of qualified personnel with training directed toward an expertise for working with people with visual impairment.

## 3. Personnel Standards

**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**

DBVI follows the same standard used by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to be in compliance with Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. This requires State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to establish qualified personnel standards for rehabilitation personnel. This addresses the qualifications necessary to meet the highest standards which are required in the State of Vermont.

DBVI follows standards set forth in the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD). This prescribes a national standard for vocational rehabilitation counselor qualifications. This standard gives highest priority to counselors with a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling. The second level of priority is for counselors with related degrees in social work, psychology, mental health counseling or special education. This group must complete four additional courses to meet the standard: Foundations of Rehabilitation; Career Counseling; Vocational Assessment and Evaluation, and Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Disability. All efforts are made to hire new counselors into this standard.

When unable to recruit qualified candidates that meet the two highest levels, DBVI hires counselor with bachelor’s degrees and supports their graduate training through our RSA training grant. Though not required by the Division or RSA, some counselors continue on to become Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC).

DBVI has a standard of bachelor’s degree for new Rehabilitation Associates and Associate Counselors. This provides the groundwork for moving Associates into graduate programs, helping DBVI maintain qualified staff. Presently all DBVI Rehab Counselor positions are filled by qualified professionals. All staff receive extensive training to help them learn and understand services for visually impaired individuals and the implication caused by visual loss. Training is focused around meeting with other highly trained vision professionals both within DBVI and from our sister agency, VABVI (Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired).

All new employees receive training with a qualified rehabilitation therapist, a low vision therapist and orientation and mobility instructor. In addition, they are scheduled to meet with the rehabilitation technology specialist to learn about how adaptive equipment can enhance job opportunities for consumers. They also meet with professionals from VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Rehabilitation and Industry) to learn about job development and placement. The performance expectations of all newly hired staff are to meet all the expected standards established for the position.

All newly hired staff are required to attend a DBVI services training program taught by staff that covers DBVI’s Policy and Procedures, the full vocational rehabilitation process, effective case management, collaboration with partners providing employment services and other agency partners. Additionally new hires attend agency orientation which includes the following required trainings: HIPPA, Preventing and Addressing sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Conflict of Interest, Ethics, and Motivational Interviewing. Existing staff are required to update these trainings periodically.

DBVI allows for flexible work schedules, provides training assistance, supports state, regional and national learning opportunities and is strongly supportive of the time, effort, and commitment expended by each staff member to establish and maintain educational standards. DBVI encourages the use of training funds for staff to use to attain and maintain professional standards and to maintain and enhance their professional capabilities. DBVI seeks and distributes information and training opportunities for staff at the regional and national level. DBVI maintains current educational material through journals, internet sites and information gathered at conferences and trainings. DBVI works with the DVR Staff Development and Training Coordinator to ensure inclusion in opportunities offered by educational institutions for vocational rehabilitation professionals. Opportunities for online and distance learning are also available.

###### 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.

DBVI ensures that personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with visual impairment through our partnership with the Department of Labor (DOL). DBVI is part of the unified plan to meet the requirements of the Workforce Innovation Act (WIOA). Cross trainings with DOL, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Agency of Education are designed to address the needs for adults and students with disabilities. DBVI staff have completed training on Pathways to Promising Careers. DBVI staff have direct access to Vermont DOL’s 12 regional Job Centers. DBVI is working closely with the Labor Planning and Support Administrator Youth Program Manager from DOL. Trainings have been arranged for staff to learn about the evolving labor market and programs to assist students with visual impairment. DBVI is partnering with DOL to look closer at apprenticeship programs and on-the-job training opportunities that will produce success in obtaining high wages for our consumers.

DBVI works closely with VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation) and CWS (Creative Workforce Solutions) to learn information about local employers and progressive employment opportunities. DBVI staff participated in a training in 2020 with Hugh Bradshaw, Vermont DOL. This training provided counselors with information and skills to match the needs of their consumers with the needs of the local labor market. The training enhanced counselors’ abilities to interpret labor market information to assist their consumers to make informed career decisions and effectively work as a team with job placement staff.

Counselors are knowledgeable of training and post-secondary education options that are in demand in the local labor market. Staff are aware of trainings available for high wage, high demand and high growth job opportunities for their visually impaired clients. DBVI staff stay current in understanding the evolving labor market through collaboration with the Department of Labor.

## 4. Staff Development.

###### A. System of staff development

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

The main objective for staff development at the Division for the Blind focuses on assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology in relation to visual impairment. Training for counselors focuses on the essentials of a comprehensive vocational assessment. This practice addresses how a person with a visual impairment can achieve a high standard of independence through employment. DBVI’s mission is to “support Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired in their efforts to achieve or sustain their economic independence, self-reliance, and social integration to a level consistent with their interests, abilities, and informed choice”.

Every year each DBVI employee meets with the division director to discuss their Individual Development Plan (IDP). Meetings focus on how each employee can contribute to DBVI’s mission, goals and strategies; improve customer satisfaction; and support policies, philosophy, competencies and future vision. In addition, the purpose of the IDP is to ensure that each DBVI employee receives appropriate and adequate training to meet the professional standards and requirements of their position. Discussions with the DBVI director allow employees an opportunity to identify their career ladder. DBVI staff are given opportunities to take on higher level duties and are encouraged and supported to participate in education and training programs. Increased responsibilities and education can lead to a higher step grade as determined by the Director and Department of Human Resources.

DBVI has a partnership with the VR Staff Development and Training Coordinator to obtain recommendations on upcoming trainings available within the Agency of Human Services and DVR. Needed trainings are determined through IDP developed by DBVI staff. DBVI staff are encouraged to participate in training opportunities to increase leadership, partnering and collaboration skills that lead to increased employment opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired.

DBVI continues to expand projects directed toward our younger transition aged students and young adults. DBVI partners with the VR Transition Program Director; Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Teachers of the Visually Impaired; the Department of Labor Youth Program Manager from the Workforce Development Unit; and the Agency of Education Program Coordinator. New initiatives to address services for students who are visually impaired and to ensure they are receiving the Pre-ETS core services. DBVI staff help to create and attend the annual Interagency Core Team Event. Counselors are active members of regional Core transition teams and attend meetings and events regularly which provide opportunities to network with other transition service providers. DBVI counselors are active in attending and providing information at IEP meetings for students ages 14-21. DBVI counselors work closely with Vermont DOL Youth case managers to support students with visual impairment. DBVI staff have and continue to provide training to DOL staff regarding adaptive skill instruction, orientation and mobility, rehab teaching and low vision training to assist with progressive employment.

The project, Great Expectations-Voices and Choices for the Future is a collaborative effort by DBVI, VABVI and VABIR. The purpose of the project is to increase employment and job seeking skills, promote positive mentoring, networking, obtain feedback from clients to improve services and to empower client around self-advocacy and self-reliance. Great Expectations is consumer driven and is accomplished through a series of planning meetings resulting in an annual theme-based event. The 2020 event was “Vermont DBVI Employment Awareness Summit.

DBVI researches and looks at new ways to provide and increase services for transition age youth. DBVI staff receive ongoing training through local and regional in-state programs to stay current on: The National Library Services, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resources, Diversity and numerous others. DBVI staff is especially diligent about perusing pertinent journals and research and disseminating relevant articles and information via the internet, at monthly staff meetings and through in-person collaborations. The DBVI central office maintains subscriptions to several noted journals in the field (e.g., Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness). DBVI continues to seek ways to improve and enhance collaboration with other agencies through attendance at combined meetings, in-service trainings, and direct staff contact.

DBVI has greatly enhanced its collaboration with other organizations to the benefit of this division. In particular, the LEAP program for summer youth employment is a model of cooperation. This involves DBVI (provider of consumers, funding), Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (infrastructure, staff), Resource (jobs, staff), Linking Learning to Life (follow-up, e-mentoring), VABVI (independent living and O&M trainings, transition staff) and the Gibney Family Foundation (funding). This unique summer residential program provides youth with vision impairments work based learning opportunities, employment, community service and independent living experiences in an urban setting. For summers 2020 and 2021 during the COVID pandemic, LEAP staff developed effective virtual programs for participants. The LEAP staff have developed and began in 2020 offering workshops throughout the year to provide youth with continued vocational and independent skill development opportunities in addition to the summer program.

DBVI is active with CWS (Creative Workforce Solutions), a job development coalition of State of Vermont funded employment programs which promotes cooperative job placement and employer relationships. DBVI and VABIR staff assist consumers with job preparation, resume writing and interview skill development as well as develop progressive employment opportunities for consumers. DBVI and VABIR staff explain financial incentives and provide ADA information. CWS serves to connect employers to qualified consumers for employment and support access to needed accommodations. CWS works to develop cooperative relationships with area employers for long lasting job matches.

###### B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge

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

DBVI staff regularly participate in trainings and review current research and publications through the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC) through Mississippi State University.

DBVI uses the C3 management model developed by Robin Lawton. This model supports a strong belief and process for a “Customer Centered Culture”. This method helps DBVI to identify the "voice of the customer". DBVI continues to use the process of assessing customer satisfaction and organizational performance with the knowledge obtained through extensive training and consultation from Robin Lawton. DBVI has incorporated this model of management into our service delivery and organizational process. Training has been provided to our SRC, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the DBVI staff.

The main dimensions of the model are: Focus on the customer, eliminate ambiguity, include customer priorities. Empower the end user, define success, reduce ambiguity of language. Link customer and operational priorities. Integrate and leverage existing initiatives, focus on improvement. Address outcomes first, processes last, satisfy strategic objectives as well as operations, improve product knowledge. Emphasize sustainability of new practices and challenge traditional assumptions. Using this model DBVI strives to improve customer satisfaction as we decrease ambiguity and improve communication. C3 provides a method to measure successful outcomes based on the "voice of the customer".

In 2020 DBVI conducted town meetings statewide using C3 to allow a process for hearing the voice of the customer. DBVI collected and analyzed information that will be used in the development of DBVI’s strategic planning and service delivery. C3 training and consultation with Robin Lawton have provided DBVI staff with the tools and methodology to improve customer satisfaction and provide a higher level of service.

Using strategies from C3, DBVI created “Your Guide to Employment Services”. The guide is given to consumers during the initial interview and contains customer friendly language that explains who we are, our process, includes client success stories and describes the types of services that a person can expect from participating in the employment program. The guide provides information to increase communication and clarity by using common language. DBVI uses input from our customers to ensure information is accessible, comprehensive, empowering, understandable and informative. DBVI continues to develop new tools and enhance the “Guide to Employment Services”.

The DBVI team also uses the Franklin Covey management system. “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” has been incorporated into the DBVI team culture to enhance effectiveness, responsibility, personal growth and vision. Our team approach uses a win-win philosophy, which helps to increase understanding and communication. DBVI supports creative cooperation among staff.

Using this both “The 7 Habits of Effective People” and the “Customer Centered Culture” management systems have resulted in teams that are effective in analyzing, improving and providing services for people who are visually impaired.

The DBVI Division Director meets annually with the four regional teams throughout the state and assistive technology teams to discuss and review each team’s mission and vision, annual goals and accomplishments.

## STAFF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

DBVI has partnered with VR to provide training in Motivational Interviewing. All DBVI staff have completed training sessions. This training allows an opportunity for staff to receive feedback and support using the motivational counseling techniques.

DBVI vocational staff participated in the Virtual Job Shadow (VJS) Customer Training in January 2021 to learn how and to provide access for DBVI’s customers to VJS’s interactive and engaging career exploration and career planning platform.

DBVI staff attended a workshop to increase awareness of functional limitations for people who are visually Impaired and best practice for working with our clients. Dan Norris from the Vermont Association for the Blind, Adult Services Supervisor and instructor at UMass Boston provided the instruction. He designed the training to address best practice to meet the learning needs of new staff and presented advanced material for more experienced staff. This training provides new staff with valuable information regarding environmental and workplace assessments for clients and how to identify needed accommodations and supports. Information is presented on the different types of visual diagnoses and how they impact individuals.

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired hosts an annual technology fair for DBVI professionals and DBVI clients. This provides a hands-on opportunity to explore adaptive devices such as: electronic magnification, computer software, illuminated canes, talking glucose meters, kitchen aids, handheld magnification, telescopic devices, writing aids and large print items. Workshops on current technology and product demonstrations are also provided.

DBVI staff continue to participate in trainings on relevant assessments needed for persons with visual impairment. These trainings are presented by qualified vision professionals. Trainings address new and relevant assistive technology for people who are blind and visually impaired and job analysis used to determine the need for a technology assessment and training.

Ongoing consultation is available for staff to support understanding of adaptive technology and how it can enhance an individual’s job performance. Coordination and communication with low vision optometrists to enhance visual function in an employment situation is ongoing.

**Individual staff professional development in 2020 and 2021** as follows:

One Rehabilitation Counselor II is participating in the Vermont Certified Public Manager Program (VCPM) provided in partnership with the State of Vermont’s Center for Achievement in Public Service (CAPS) and UVM Masters in Public Administration September 2021 through June 2023.

**Committees:** Agency and Department committees: AWARE Help Desk; DBVI/VR Governance Committee; DBVI QA Management; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) taskforce; Interagency Core Team Planning Committee; Youth Advocacy Council Steering Committee.

State committees 2020 and 2021: State Rehabilitation Council; Governor’s Committee of Employment for People with Disabilities (GCEPD).

**Collaboratives**: Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development Grant, Institute for Community Inclusion UMASS, Learning Collaborative; Rural Apprenticeships of Youth Development (RYAD) Learning Collaborative; Tri-State Collaborative of working with deafblind consumers.

**Trainings:** Vermont Agency of Human Services Leadership Academy; HIPPA; Diversity; Ethics; Records and Information Management; Civility and Unconscious Bias; Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace; Common Adult Eye Conditions; Anatomy and Physiology of the Eye; JAWS; ZoomText; Vision Rehabilitation and Orientation and Mobility; LGBTQ + and Disability: An Introduction to working with clients with intersecting identities; NRTC Social Isolation; Cultivating Resilience; Creative Options for Using Virtual Training to Spur Career Development Training; Progressive Employment Webinar ICI UMASS Boston; Virtual Job Shadow Tough conversations on Racism.

**Conferences**: NEAER Conference; Vermont Family Network Youth Summit: finding Your Story with Hassan Davis; 2020 and 2021 Vermont Interagency Core Team Events; National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) 2020 and 2021 Fall Conferences.

## 5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

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

The Division for the Blind operates under the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services. The Agency of Human Services has a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) policy that provides services to individuals who have limited English speaking ability. This policy applies to all Agency Departments, offices and employees. The LEP policy provides consumers with language assistance as may be needed to ensure meaningful access to our programs. Each department and office provide assistance so that persons seeking services may communicate effectively with program providers and with agency and department staff. Departments ensure persons seeking services understand which services and benefits are available to them and how they may best access. The LEP information provides resources and links dealing with written, face-to-face and over the phone communication with individuals for whom English is not the primary language. DBVI is able to use an agency contract for phone and written translation of almost any language in the world. DBVI also makes use of Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS), an online resource to obtain interpreters of ASL for those consumers who are deaf or DeafBlind.

## 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.**

DBVI works in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Vermont Department of Labor. The development of the Unified State Plan ensures compliance with the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). These steps ensure students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 are receiving comprehensive and unduplicated services. DBVI is a partner on the Regional Core Transition teams in the State of Vermont. DBVI counselors work closely with DVR Youth Transition Counselors, VABIR Employment Consultants, DOL Youth Employment Specialists, Guidance counselors and Case managers to ensure that students on IEPs are receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services and participating in activities as required in WIOA.

DBVI works closely with the teachers of the Visually Impaired partially funded through the AOE and the school districts. Students receive adaptive equipment and training to be prepared for active participation in job exploration, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy and planning for post-secondary education or training.

DBVI provides funding for student participation in the LEAP summer program (Learn Earn and Prosper) and LEAP programs during the academic year. The LEAP program provides students with learning about self-advocacy, post-secondary opportunities, and work readiness skills along with participation in work-based learning. Students who are visually impaired and at risk can work with counselors through Vermont Jobs Program. Students and their families can receive advocacy and education through the Vermont Family Network. DBVI provides transition age students who are visually impaired with vocational counseling, trainings, worksite accommodations, work experiences, advocacy and support. The annual Core Transition event is created and coordinated in partnership with DBVI, DOL, DVR, and AOE. Professionals gain increased knowledge and awareness of current practice and techniques that provide desired results for transition students through ongoing training, team collaboration and development of new initiatives.

# k. Annual Estimates

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

## Current Narrative:

**Summary of Overall Vermont Data**

Erickson, W., Lee, C., VonSchrader, S (2021). Disability Statistics from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute (YTI). Cornell University Disability Statistics website: [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org) <https://data.census.gov/>

US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020. Suburban Stats (2019). Population Demographics for Vermont. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont> https://data.census.gov/

**Age--**In 2018, the prevalence of disability in Vermont was:

* 14.2 percent for persons of all ages
* 7.4 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
* 7.7 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
* 11.5 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
* 24.6 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
* 45 percent for persons ages 75+

**Disability Type--**In 2018, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in Vermont was:

* 2.6% reported a Visual Disability
* 4.7% reported a Hearing Disability
* 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
* 5.8% reported a Cognitive Disability
* 2.3% reported a Self-Care Disability
* 5.4% reported an Independent Living Disability

**Gender -** In 2018, 18.4 percent of females of all ages and 15% percent of males of all ages in Vermont reported a disability.

**Hispanic/Latino -** In 2018, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in the United States was 8.9% and the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in Vermont was 9.5 percent.

**Race -** In the United States in 2018, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

* 10.4 percent among Whites
* 13.3 percent among Black / African Americans
* 4.3 percent Asian
* 9.7 percent among persons of some other race(s)

**Race--**In Vermont in 2018, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

* 11.6 percent among Whites
* 5.6 percent among Black / African Americans
* 0.8 percent Asian
* 18 percent among persons of some other race(s)

**Populations in Households in Vermont**

US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020. Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

* Ages 15 to 17=12,648
* Ages 18 to 19 = 6,392
* Ages 20 = 3,244
* Ages 21 = 3,615
* Ages 22 to 24 =11,034
* Ages 25 to 29 = 17,175
* Ages 30 to 34 = 16,550
* Ages 35 to 39 = 17,699
* Ages 40 to 44 = 20,309
* Ages 45 to 49 = 24,165
* Ages 50 to 54 = 25,494
* Ases 55 to 59 = 23,675
* Ages 60 to 61 = 8,773
* Ages 62 to 64 = 11,666
* Ages 65 to 66 = 6,249
* Ages 67 to 69 = 8,027
* Ages 70 to 74 = 9,391

**Number of Individuals who are minorities**

US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020. Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

* Total population of Vermont= 625,741
* White- 596,292
* Two or More Races=10,753
* Hispanic or Latino=9,208
* Asian=7,947
* Black or African=6,277
* American Indian=2,207
* Another Race=2,105
* Three or More Races=610
* Native Hawaiian=160

**Summary of Visual Disability Data in Vermont**

This CSNA references estimates for working age adults by the US Census bureau as well as data from the American Community Survey which provides us with specific data for visual disability.

**Working Age Adults**

DBVI estimates that there are approximately 5,550 Vermonters of working age (18-74) who are blind or severely visually impaired, and that this is a conservative estimate of total numbers due to preliminary MMIS data review. DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 3.7% of these individuals annually (200 in FFY21).

**Visual Disability Total= 16,269** (2.6% of 625,741 Vermont population)

**Ages 18-74= 5,550** - Vermonters of working age who are blind or visually impaired.

US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020. Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

**Education Level**

In 2018, in Vermont, age 21 to 64 years with a visual disability have an educational attainment of less than high school education = 649 (11.7% of 5,550)

In 2018, in Vermont, age 21 to 64 years with a visual disability with a high school diploma or equivalent = 2,259 (40.7% of 5,550)

In 2018 in Vermont age 21 to 64 with a visual disability with some college/associates degree = 1,171 (21.1% of 5,550)

In 2018, College Bachelor Degree or higher =1,471 (26.5% of 5,550)

**Gap—**Education Level--Visual Disability

* The majority of individuals with a visual disability do not get a college degree.

**Number of Youth who are Deaf-Blind**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/189sATr89VCj650qtBeU29jtRGWS9yN-6JJxrEVw9YGs/edit?usp=sharing

Ages 12 to 17=11

Ages 18 to 21=3

**DBVI Projections for PY 2021**

* The cost per employment outcome will remain at the $18,000 to $19,000 level.
* Employment outcomes will increase to 45.

**DBVI Projections for Case Status Information PY 2019:**

* The number of new plans will be 65.
* The number of individuals served through supported employment will be 5.
* The number of new applications to increase to 65.

**DBVI Projections for students receiving Pre-ETS**

PY 2021 projection is 35.

**Data from RSA 113:**

**New Applications**

* FFY 2016---81
* FFY 2017---53
* FFY 2018--- 77
* FFY 2019---62
* FFY 2020---65

**Individuals Implementing Plan, on hand October 1st**

* FFY 2016---231
* FFY 2017---206
* FFY 2018---179
* FFY 2019---179
* FFY 2020---192

**Number of Employment Plans Developed:**

* FFY 2016---77
* FFY 2017---48
* FFY 2018---72
* FFY 2019---62
* FFY 2020---61

**Achieve Employment Outcome**

* FFY 2016---81
* FFY 2017---64
* FFY 2018---49
* FFY 2019---26
* FFY 2020---31

**Closed After Services Initiated, Without Employment**

* FFY 2016---21
* FFY 2017---16
* FFY 2019---23
* FFY 2019---23
* FFY 2020---20

**Agency Expenditures Services Provided by DBVI (from RSA 2)**

**Private Community Rehabilitation Programs**

* FFY 2016---$286,990
* FFY 2017---$265,444
* FFY 2018---$539,566
* FFY 2019---$464,797
* FFY 2020---$317,968

**Total Innovation and Expansion Activity Costs**

* FFY 2016---$12,900
* FFY 2017---$17,347
* FFY 2018---$11,518
* FFY 2019---$12,668
* FFY 2020---$9,275

**Assessment**

* FFY 2016--- $4,886
* FFY 2017---$3,060
* FFY 2018---$9,578
* FFY 2019---$5,585
* FFY 2020---$3,902

**Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments**

* FFY 2016---$43,493
* FFY 2017---$39,193
* FFY 2018---$41,702
* FFY 2019---$48,555
* FFY 2020---$34,554

**Four-Year College or University Training**

* FFY 2016---$49,517
* FFY 2017---$47,567
* FFY 2018---$45,128
* FFY 2019---$50,661
* FFY 2020---$24,739

**Occupational or Vocational Training**

* FFY 2016---$112,178
* FFY 2017---$33,770
* FFY 2018---$2,678
* FFY 2019---$7,606
* FFY 2020---$844

**Job Readiness Training**

* FFY 2016---$101,347
* FFY 2017---$200,456
* FFY 2018---$381,760
* FFY 2019---$297,586
* FFY 2020---$195,730

**Disability Related Skills Training**

* FFY 2016---$70,297
* FFY 2017---$48,022
* FFY 2018---$75,594
* FFY 2019---$41,471
* FFY 2020---$42,683

**Transportation**

* FFY 2016---$61,280
* FFY 2017---$55,921
* FFY 2018---$24,637
* FFY 2019---$43,455
* FFY 2020---$15,823

**Total SE Program Service Expenditure**

* FFY 2016---$7,335
* FFY 2017---$8,306
* FFY 2018---$0
* FFY 2019---$2,523
* FFY 2020---$0

**Assessment, Counseling, Guidance, and Placement**

* FFY 2016---$923,154
* FFY 2017---$1,000,008
* FFY 2018---$932,204
* FFY 2019---$872,520
* FFY 2020---$680,479

## k. 2. A. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under the VR Program;

**Current Narrative:**

DBVI estimates the following number of individuals will receive services for FFY 2022:

* Individuals who are not students (including all ages) who receive services in the DBVI VR program = 225 served.
* Individuals who are deaf-blind (Using the HKNC definition) =4 each year.
* Students who receive Pre-ETS services as a Pre-Application student = 20.
* Students in high school and open in the DBVI VR program = 35 each year.
* Students in college =10.
* The case services budget for providing services in PY 2022 is estimated at $550,000.
* The pre-ETS budget for students is estimated at $200,000.

DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:

* Between the ages of 14 and 21;
* Is in an educational program; and
* Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

**Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting**

Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.

**FFY 2021--As of September 30, 2021:**

* $230,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)
* $10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses
* $100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP contract)
* $120,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.
* $3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).
* $0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services

**Calculation:** Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= $230,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= $120,000 divided by 35 students equals an Average Cost Per Student= $3,500; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= $110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= $230,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= $0

**Projections for FFY 2022 and 2023:**

* $221,200 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)
* $10,000 for staff time and associated expenses
* $90,400 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)
* $120,800 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.
* $3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).
* $0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services

**Calculation:** Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= $205,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= $120,800 divided by 35 students equals an Average Cost Per Student= $3,500; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= $100,400; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= $221,200; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= $0

A statewide estimate of students exiting/graduating high school at the end of SY 2022 is 11 students. The were 17 students statewide who graduated in SY 2021.

k. 2. B. The Supported Employment Program**; and**

**Current Narrative:**

**DBVI has consistently increased or maintained the number of individuals served.**

* PY 2019=5; PY 2020=3
* PY 2021=5 (Projection)
* PY 2022=5 (Projection)

### k. 2. C. Each priority category, if under an order of selection.

#### Current Narrative:

NA.

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

#### Current Narrative:

NA.

### k. 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.

#### Current Narrative:

Expense estimates for PY 2021 are as follows:

The case services budget for providing services in PY 2021 is estimated at $550,000.

The pre-ETS budget for students is estimated at $200,000.

Title VI funds for supported employment will be $6,000.

# l. State Goals and Priorities

## l. 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

**Current Narrative:**

Based on the DBVI/SRC Tri-Annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed in CY 2020 and other PY 2020 data, DBVI and the SRC have established targets for PY 2023 for DBVI’s Strategic Plan goals.  DBVI and the SRC have also established goals and priorities in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). DBVI and the SRC established goals and priorities related to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. All DBVI goals and priorities are established within the Division’s long-established strategic themes for all participants of the DBVI program that include:

* Economic Independence.
* Blindness Related Adaptive Skill Building (Assistive Technology; Low Vision; O+M; Blindness Rehabilitation Evaluation and Teaching).
* Delivering DBVI services well and assisting individuals to become better off.
* Expanding program growth and partnerships.

**PY 2022 Goals and Priorities**

**Goal 1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.**

DBVI is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. The new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. The WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of DBVI staff on a day-to-day basis. DBVI decided to establish the following leading measures:

* Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
* Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

PY 2023 Targets for the Lead Indicators:

* 20% of case closures will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* 50% of case closures will include blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
* 50% of case closures will include blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

PY 2023 Targets for WIOA Performance Measures

* Measurable Skills Gains will be 50%.
* Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit will be 60%
* Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit will be $7,500.
* Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit will be 50%
* Credential Attainment Rate will be 85%.

**Goal 2.** **DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.**

DBVI believes that in order to increase median earnings six months post closure, the agency must increase earnings at closure.

PY 2020 Results:

* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings less than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure was 21% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure was 79% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 150% of minimum wage at employment closure was 45% in PY 2020.

PY 2023Targets:

* DBVI consumers earning less than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure will be 20% or less.
* DBVI consumers earning 110% or greater of minimum wage at closure will be 50% or greater.
* DBVI consumers earning 150% or greater of minimum wage at closure will be 50% or greater.

**Goal 3. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.**

Post-secondary credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment and meaningful careers.

PY 2020 Results:

* The number of individuals achieving PSE credential was 5 in PY 2020.
* The number of individuals engaged in PSE credential training was 24 in PY 2020.

PY 2023 Targets:

* Number of individuals achieving PSE credential attainment will be 10.
* The number of individuals engaged in PSE credential training will be 30.

**Goal 4. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in these programs.**

DOL programs can offer DBVI consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential and higher wage employment.

PY 2020 Results:

* The number of individuals with DOL involvement was 1 in PY 2020.
* The percentage of case closures that had services from the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation was 22% in PY 2020.

Other Trainings in PY 2020:

* Occupational vocational training was 1.
* On the job Training was 0.
* Registered Apprenticeship was 0.
* Basic Academic Remedial or Literacy Training was 0.
* Job Readiness Training was14.
* Disability Related Skills Training was 55.
* Work Based Learning Experience was15.

PY 2023 Target:

* The number of DBVI consumers enrolled in a DOL programs will be 4.
* The number of DBVI consumers enrolled in other training programs will be 40.

**Goal 5. DBVI will continue to implement highly effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students statewide.**

PY 2020 Results:

* The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services has grown from 17% of people served in SFY 2014 to 27% of people served in SFY 2020 and remains substantial at 25% in SFY 2021.

PY 2020 Pre-ETS Services:

* Total count of pre-ETS services was 95.
* Job Exploration Counseling was 2.
* Work-based Learning Experiences was 47.
* Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities was 2.
* Workplace Readiness Training was 36.
* Instruction in Self-Advocacy was 8.
* Count of Student with Disability was 31.
* Count of Student receiving pre-ETS who Applied was 20.

PY 2023 Targets:

* The percentage of population served under age 22 at entry into DBVI services will be 25% or higher.

PY 2020 Pre-ETS Services:

* Total count of pre-ETS services will be 100.
* Job Exploration Counseling will be 8.
* Work-based Learning Experiences will be 50.
* Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities will be 8.
* Workplace Readiness Training will be 40.
* Instruction in Self-Advocacy will be 20.
* Count of Student with Disability will be 30.
* Count of Student receiving pre-ETS who Applied will be20.

**Goal 6. DBVI will partner with DVR and CWS to continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).**

Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities and careers. Creative Workforce Solutions is the employer engagement and marketing arm of DVR. DVR measures employer engagement through the following three metrics:

* New Employer Contacts: These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS.
* Employer Activities: These are defined as engagement activities with employers who have an ongoing relationship with CWS.
* Employer Opportunities: These are defined as specific consumer opportunities such as a job opening, training opportunity, work-based learning opportunity, company tour or informational interview.

The annual targets for the CWS team for PY 2020 and PY 2021 are:

* Contacts: 750 new contacts per program year.
* Activities: 2,250 distinct engagement activities per program year.
* Opportunities: 2,500 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year.

Goal 7. **DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.**

DBVI recognizes that there continues to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

* Individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meet the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system of care priorities.
* Individuals with other severe disabilities, including individuals who are deaf-blind who need supported employment.

PY 2020 Results:

* There were 3 individuals served in PY 2020 who received supported employment services.
* There were 4 individuals served in PY 2020 with a disability impairment of “Deaf-blindness.”
* There were 10% of individuals served who identified as minorities in PY 2020.

DBVI will partner with DVR to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders.

PY 2023 Target:

* Number of individuals served who identified as minorities will be 10%.
* Number of individuals served who received supported employment services will be 4.
* Number of individuals served with a disability impairment of "Deaf-blindness” will be 4.

**Goal 8. DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program’s services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.**

PY 2020 Results:

The most recent preliminary results of the 3-year statewide random survey of all participants in the DBVI Vocational Vision Rehabilitation program (Conducted by Market Decisions in December 2021:

* + 93% of respondents said they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.
  + 93% of respondents said overall, they are better off as a result of the services they received from DBVI.
  + 98% of respondents said that DBVI staff treated them with dignity and respect.
  + 97% of respondents said that DBVI helped them achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals,
  + 81% of respondents said that DBVI services met their expectations.
  + 91% of respondents said that DBVI vocational rehabilitation services helped them become more independent.
  + 94% of respondents said that DBVI helped them reach their job goals.

PY 2023 Target:

* In the next Tri-Annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey scheduled for December 2024, at least 95% of respondents will report that they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.

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

#### Current Narrative:

See Goal 7.

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

l. 3. A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates**;**

**Current Narrative:**

The goals were developed as part of DBVI’s comprehensive needs assessment which included an Employment Summit, surveys, focus groups, journal research, and staff/SRC input. DBVI staff met several times to review the needs of all results with the SRC to determine the goals. These are outlined in the input from the SRC and the statewide assessment sections.

### l. 3. B. The State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

**Current Narrative:**

Vermont’s DVR and DBVI programs also received data for the first time on all five WIOA Common Performance Measures and how we compared to national averages. This data shows that:

* Vermont VR consumers are achieving all outcomes at a higher rate than the national average on all five performance measures.
* The employment rate two quarters post exit improved continues to improve, moving from 49% in SFY 2019 to 51.1% in SFY 2020 to 53.5% in SFY 2021.
* The median earnings two quarters post exit increased jumped from being below the national average in SFY 2020 to being above it in SFY 2021, with an increase from $3,901 in SFY 2020 to $4,630 in SFY 2021.
* See Goal #1above for Performance Measures that are specific to the DBVI program.

Based on the data gathered and discussions with the State Rehabilitation Council and DBVI, the following are the key findings of the CY 2017-2020 DBVI Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

* DBVI needs to create apprenticeship opportunities.
* DBVI needs to identify and implement strategies to increase consumer hourly wages at closure.
* DBVI consumers need opportunities to gain industry recognized credentials in skilled professions.
* DBVI must develop strategies to meet and exceed the outcome targets under the Common Performance Measures.

The WIOA Common Performance Measures significantly change the way DBVI is measured. The emphasis on career development, credential attainment, and measurable skills gains, will require DBVI to consider changing current practice. As previously noted, DBVI will be looking at strategies to increase wages and assist consumers in obtaining industry recognized credentials. In addition, DBVI will continue to help consumers develop a career path.

### l. 3. 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.

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI reviewed data provided by RSA from the Chris Pope presentation to the NCSAB membership that included the performance measures for all blind agencies. These data and progress to goals and priorities from the last state plan, and results of the CSNA were evaluated by DBVI and the SRC and used to shape this new state plan.

# o. State’s Strategies

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

**Current Narrative:**

In Section (l) of the State Plan, DBVI outlined its goals and priorities for Program Year 2022. The goals and strategies established by DBVI and the SRC are as follows:

**Goals:**

1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.
2. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.
3. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.
4. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in DOL programs.
5. DBVI will improve the outcomes for students and youth.
6. DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).
7. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.
8. DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program’s services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

**Strategy 1: DBVI will implement a series of initiatives to align staff practices, services and assignment of resources to meet the WIOA Common Performance Measures. Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

In order to maximize DBVI outcomes under the WIOA Common Performance Measures, DBVI will implement or continue to implement the following:

* DBVI will track the three leading indicators which are:
* Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* Leading Measure Two: The involvement of master’s level certified blindness instructors to strengthen consumer adaptive skills in completing their employment goal.
* Leading Measure Three: Assistive technology evaluation or training to assist consumer with their employment goal.
* All DBVI staff will be trained to do vocational assessments and use assessments as a career planning tool.
* All staff will be familiar with education and training providers in their communities, as well as what career pathways and stackable credentials are offered. Counselors will be able to speak to consumers about possible career paths, based on assessments.
* Business Account Managers (BAMa) will understand the career paths in the businesses they serve.

**Strategy 2: Coordinate efforts with the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) and the Agency of Education (AOE) to ensure that blind and visually impaired individuals have access to employment training and other components of the workforce system. Goals 2 and 4.**

As noted in the Unified Section of the plan, DBVI will be working closely with DVR, VDOL and AOE to ensure DBVI consumers have access to all the workforce development opportunities available in their communities. DBVI will be implementing strategies to make this happen including the following:

* DBVI will meet regularly with VDOL to facilitate coordination of services.
* DBVI, DVR, AOE and VDOL will implement systems to track and manage co-enrollment in each other’s programs.
* DBVI will explore virtual access to DOL programs.
* DBVI, with the support of DVR, AOE, and the RYAD learning collaborative will develop stronger partnerships with the local Technical Educational Centers, Adult Basic Education programs, AmeriCorps, and Community College of Vermont.
* DBVI will implement a plan for staying connected with all DOL partners of the AJC.
* DBVI will work closely with DOL to create and implement the Unified Plan with a common mission and vision to include all Vermonters in the workforce.
* DBVI will work with CWS local teams, Business Account Managers, and DOL to obtain employment needs of companies and then match DBVI customers with specific training.
* DBVI will invite DOL and AOE to a staff meeting to discuss collaboration ideas.

**Strategy 3: Expand employer outreach and engagement efforts through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) to effectively meet the needs of employers.  Goals 1 and 6.**

As described in Section (g) of the State Plan, CWS is the primary employer outreach and engagement infrastructure for DVR and DBVI. CWS, and in particular the Business Account Managers, have been a very effective approach to engaging employers and developing employment opportunities for DBVI consumers. DBVI will expand these efforts through the following strategies:

* Seek opportunities to coordinate employer engagement with the Vermont Department of Labor.
* Build on and expand employer events such as job fairs, employer breakfasts and business recognition events designed to engage employers.

**Strategy 4: Explore strategies to assist DBVI consumers to retain or advance in employment. Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4.**

DBVI will develop and implement a systematic approach to follow up with consumers after job placement. The intent will be to re-engage the consumer at key points to determine:

* If they need or want more support to retain their employment?
* If they want assistance with career development and training in their current employment?
* If they want to pursue further career development with a different employer or in a different field?

The follow up will occur at key points after initial job placement. The first contact will be immediately after initial job placement through a congratulations letter and follow up call from the VR counselor.

The second contact will occur at 60 days post placement. The final contact will occur at three months post-employment closure.

The hope is that this systematic follow up will both help consumers retain employment and identify opportunities for career advancement.

**Strategy 5. Continue to explore strategies to develop and expand services for underserved populations including individuals who require supported employment through partnerships, grant and funding opportunities. Goals 2 and 7.**

* DBVI will create an inclusive outreach plan that includes consumers and providers.
* Develop a set of outreach materials to be used at events across the state including outreach to minorities and underserved populations.
* Support efforts to establish Deaf-Blind SSP services in Vermont.
* Educate providers about the importance of timely referrals.
* Outreach to developmental disabilities services and mental health agencies that typically do not refer to DBVI.
* Each DBVI region will create an outreach plan for the year that includes outreach to minorities and other underserved or underrepresented individuals in each region.
* Coordinate with DVR Transition Counselors, and the Teachers of the Visually Impaired to increase and expand services for transition students. Create some documents that explain what DBVI can offer.
* Create a statewide system to track all visually impaired students as they graduate high school.

**Strategy 6: Improve Outcomes for Students and Youth. Goal 5.**

* Each DBVI Counselor will meet at the beginning of the school year with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to create a plan for identifying potentially eligible students and opening eligible students in the DBVI VR program.
* Each DBVI Counselor will meet with the General DVR Transition Counselor in their region.
* A DBVI Action Plan Transition form will be completed and updated annually for all eligible students.
* Participate in statewide Core Transition Teams.
* Continue to expand pre-employment transitional services offered in the Learn, Earn and Prosper (LEAP) Program to meet the needs of students and families and therefore increase enrollment participation.
* Continue to develop LEAP virtual pre-employment transitional programming as well as in person community day programming.
* Each IL Rehabilitation Associate will reach out to partners including VRTs, Orientation and Mobility Instructors and Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to identify potentially eligible students in the DBVI IL program.

**Strategy 7**: **DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address “Societies reaction to blindness.” Goals 1 and 6.**

* Create products to bring and teach employers to understand the assistive equipment
* Create a network of ambassadors who demonstrate their assistive technology or white canes and demonstrate to the employers about how they use technology to complete work tasks and travel independently.
* Create a video of people working at their job.
* Find opportunities to show the film “Going Blind” to employer groups at Chambers, Rotary’s, and public libraries.
* Find opportunities to teach employer groups about assistive technology.
* Encourage employers to visit the DBVI website.
* Explore the idea of connecting employers through discussion group.
* Work closely with GCEPD to promote employment of people with disabilities.
* Create educational activities for White Cane Day and Disability Awareness Month in October.
* Create a PSA involving an employed individual and company.
* Offer Simulations to demonstrate “what is it like to be blind?”

**Strategy 8. DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment.**  **Goals 1and 2.**

* Continue Great Expectations consumer driven events each year.
* Create workshops to develop interpersonal and employment skills
* Create employment support groups.
* Create networking events.
* Opportunities to practice interview and job readiness skills.
* Create peer mentoring opportunities for adjustment to blindness and technology.

**Strategy 9: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information.**

**Goals: 4 and 8.**

* Create opportunities for Peer-to-Peer Technology Instruction
* DBVI will continue to expand the information on the website and will work with the SRC for ideas.
* Use Customer-Centered Culture to determine “what types of information customers really want?”
* Find ways to improve the process for the accessibility of online job applications.

**Strategy 10: DBVI will address transportation challenges. Goals: 7 and 8.**

* DBVI will work with VTRANS to learn more about their “Go Vermont” website that helps people connect with all the available transportation options in their area.
* Coordinate with the Vermont Transportation Department on their new initiate and technology application that helps travelers find all the available transportation options in an area.
* Consider policy to pay for mileage and time of VABVI drivers in order to have a network of drivers available to meet transportation needs.
* Participate in system level planning.
* Assist VABVI to increase the number of volunteer drivers.
* Promote the option for DBVI to pay for the first 60 days of a ride to the job.

**Strategy 11: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services. Goals**: 8.

* DBVI will develop a consistent statewide orientation to DBVI services which will be implemented in all four regional offices.
* DBVI will work within the principles of Customer-Centered Culture to make sure we are answering the question: “What does the consumer really want?”
* DBVI will continually evaluate timeliness, accuracy, and ease of obtaining services. DBVI will establish an ongoing closure survey. Results will be shared and evaluated with the SRC on an ongoing basis.
* Ask customers to evaluate DBVI products using the Customer-Centered Culture model.
* Implement a closure survey that can be sent to all closed cases.
* DBVI will examine and develop language for successful closure that celebrates successful status for consumers in the VR and IL programs.
* DBVI will examine feasibility to pilot post closure status for the Independent Living program in collaboration with state partners such as VABVI.

**Strategy 12: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job. Goals: 1 and 2.**

* DBVI will create a consumer listserv that will be used to share technology solutions for access and work and in the community.
* Create a menu of training options ranging from expert training to independent study
* Create Peer to Peer Technology Instruction
* DBVI will problem solve to make job sites accessible through technology training.
* Use a team approach for a given situation including customer, job developer, counselor, job site technology evaluation, and training.
* DBVI will assist customers to continuously improve work related technology skills like using the internet, Microsoft Office, and Adobe documents so they can do their job in the most efficient way.

**Strategy 13: DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training.** **Goals: 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

* DBVI will work closely with vocational technical education centers in Vermont to help high school students and adults prepare for the workforce.
* Establish relationships with vocational centers to get consumers trained for positions in the area
* Attend State Technical Education Director’s Meeting
* Evaluate the impact of progressive employment on outcomes.
* Track education and training opportunities that lead to degrees or credentials.
* Establish working relationships with Vocational Tech Centers and track participation.
* DBVI will work to meet goals outlined in Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development grant and participate in RYAD learning collaborative.

### o. 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

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI has a strong and effective process for determining assistive technology needs and delivering necessary training. The DBVI technology evaluator has been providing this service to DBVI consumers for more than 20-years. This service is consistently ranked in all surveys as the most helpful for meeting employment goals. Technology is the key for opening doors for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our goal is to stay current and to find solutions for accessing the essential functions of a job. Technology is often the answer for creating access to job tasks. Once the technology is identified, it is installed and followed-up with on-site training.

The most common solutions involve screen magnification, screen readers, and electronic magnification. The I-Technology has created opportunities for DBVI consumers to use mobile technology for work tasks. People can now use voiceover on the iPhone to access their email, contacts, and calendars on-the-go. There are also several new apps that can take a picture of text documents and have it read using voiceover. Access to information is essential to many job tasks and DBVI makes this a priority.

### o. 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

#### Current Narrative:

Data from the CSNA shows that DBVI needs to continue outreach efforts in all areas. The main strategy is for each region to implement an annual outreach plan. This plan will include general outreach and specific outreach to minority groups and underserved and underrepresented groups. These plans will vary due to the nature of each region. For example, the Northeast Kingdom is very rural and the city of Burlington is very populated. Each plan will specifically include outreach to minority groups, people who are older and want to work, students, and individuals who are deaf-blind.

### o. 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)

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI uses several strategies to address the needs and transition. It begins with outreach to all students who are blind or visually impaired. Before school begins each year, DBVI Counselors meet with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired for all high schools in their region. They review the student list and determine which are potentially eligible as Pre-Application students and which are ready to be open the DBVI VR as an “Open” case. All of these students have the opportunity to participate in the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Outreach is also made directly to students and families with an explanation about the ways DBVI can assist with Transition Planning and the availability of the 5-core Pre-ETS services.

Several strategies are used to deliver the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Some students may decide to begin as a Pre-Application student and participate in work experiences in their local communities. They may also be connected with special job readiness training opportunities in their local high schools. Other students may choose to participate in short-term residential work-based learning or job readiness training. This strategy is necessary in Vermont because of the rural nature. Many small communities do not have any work experiences available. This approach makes it possible for students to choose from a variety of work experiences and internships in Burlington where there are many employers. During the school year there are several job readiness workshops during school vacations and weekends so students don’t miss school. This approach takes several partners and has shown great results. There are now many virtual pre-ETS experiences and hybrid opportunities due to the pandemic. Please see section “P” for Progress Updates.

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

#### Current Narrative:

See Strategies Above

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

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI has had a major commitment to improving our performance under section 116 of WIOA. Strategies above directly relate to improving the state’s performance with respect to the WIOA Common Performance Measures.

DBVI will continue to use the Creative Workforce System to connect DBVI consumers with employers. Progressive Employment continues to be very effective. Many DBVI consumers begin with a work experience and eventually get a job at that company. Other individuals try a couple different work experiences and decide to go for more education or vocational training in an area of their interest. These experiences are always positive steps toward determining future careers and help people learn what they like and don’t like. It is also a great way to educate employers about the abilities of people doing these jobs.

DBVI also supports college or vocational training which ultimately lead to good jobs. DBVI consistently ranks above the national blind agency average for wages and number of hours worked. This result is directly connected to college and vocational training.

* PY 2020 WIOA Performance Measures. In Vermont (includes DVR and DBVI)
* Measurable Skills Gains were 45.3% and the national average was 52.1%.
* Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit was 56.8% and the national average was 37.6%.
* Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit was $7,326 and the national average was $7,117.
* Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit was 47.9% and the national average was 30.6%.
* Credential Attainment Rate was 88.9% and the national average was 30.4%.

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

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI will work with DOL and AOE to maximize integration of individuals who are blind or visually impaired into the available trainings and programs. This will involve a commitment from all partners for universal design. DBVI has been a voice for this approach and provides expertise in this area. WIOA is a great opportunity for DBVI consumers to access these programs that have typically been underutilized by this population. Access to these programs has proven to be challenging in the past and these new partnerships using universal design will certainly open doors. DBVI is also encouraged to learn that DOL will be offering many of their programs virtually. This will provide more access for DBVI consumers.

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

## o. 8. A. Achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

#### Current Narrative:

See Above (O.1).

### o. 8. B. Support innovation and expansion activities; and

#### Current Narrative:

See Above (O.1).

### o. 8. 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.

#### Current Narrative:

DBVI has a long and successful history of collaboration with the larger General DVR Agency in Vermont to connect consumers with the most severe disabilities with the Developmental Service Agencies in Vermont. This collaboration makes it possible for students to be identified early in high school and making a determination about meeting a funding priority before graduation.

In cases when students do not meet the criteria for a waiver, DBVI has established a partnership directly with a Developmental Service Agency to provide specialized job development services.

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

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:**

## p. 1. A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals

**Current Narrative:**

PY2021 Measures, Targets, Goals and Priorities; and PY2020 updates as outlined in the previous State Plan:

**Goal 1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.**

PY 2021 Measures

* Employment retention six months post closure.
* Employment retention twelve months post closure.
* Median earnings six months post closure.
* Credential attainment rate.
* Measurable skills gains.
* Employer engagement.

DBVI is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. The new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. The WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of DBVI staff on a day-to-day basis. DBVI decided to establish the following leading measures:

* Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
* Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

PY 2021 Targets for the Lead Indicators:

* 50% of cases will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
* 50% of cases will include blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
* 50% of cases will include blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

PY 2019 and PY 2020 Update:

Leading Measures

* The percentage of case closures that had career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options was 10% in PY 2019 and 6% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of case closures that had blindness adaptive skills training from the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired was 65% in PY 2019 and 69% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of case closures that received Assistive Technology Evaluation and Training was 63% in PY 2019 and 59% in PY 2020.

PY 2020 WIOA Performance Measures In Vermont (includes DVR and DBVI)

* Measurable Skills Gains were 45.3% and the national average was 52.1%.
* Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit was 56.8% and the national average was 37.6%.
* Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit was $7,326 and the national average was $7,117.
* Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit was 47.9% and the national average was 30.6%.
* Credential Attainment Rate was 88.9% and the national average was 30.4%.

**Goal 2. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.**

PY 2021 Measures:

* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings less than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 150% of minimum wage at employment closure.

PY 2021Targets:

* DBVI consumers earning less than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure will be 20% or lower.
* DBVI consumers earning 110% or greater of minimum wage at closure will be 50% or higher.
* DBVI consumers earning 150% or greater of minimum wage at closure will be 50% or higher.

PY 2019 and 2020 Update:

* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings less than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure was 24% in PY 2019 and 21% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure was 75% in PY 2019 and 79% in PY 2020.
* The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 150% of minimum wage at employment closure was 45% in PY 2019 and 45% in PY 2020.

**Goal 3. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.**

PY 2021 Measure:

* Number of individuals achieving PSE credential attainment.

PY 2021 Targets:

* Number of individuals achieving PSE credential attainment will be 10.
* The number of individuals engaged in PSE credential training will be 30.

PY 2019 and 2020 Update:

* The number of individuals achieving PSE credential was 8 in PY 2019 and 5 in PY 2020.
* The number of individuals engaged in PSE credential training was 26 in PY 2019 and 24 in PY 2020.

**Goal 4. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in training programs.**

DOL programs can offer DBVI consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential and higher wage employment.

PY 2021 Measure:

* DBVI consumers will enroll in DOL and other training programs.

PY 2021 Target:

* The number of DBVI consumers enrolled in a DOL programs will be 4.
* The number of DBVI consumers enrolled in other training programs will be 40.

PY 2019 and 2020 Update:

* The number of individuals with DOL involvement was 0 in PY 2019 and 1 in PY 2020.
* The percentage of case closures that had services from the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation was 17% in PY 2019 and 22% in PY 2020.

Other Trainings in PY 2020:

* Occupational vocational training was 1.
* On the job Training was 0.
* Registered Apprenticeship was 0.
* Basic Academic Remedial or Literacy Training was 0.
* Job Readiness Training was14.
* Disability Related Skills Training=55
* Work Based Learning Experience was15.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

* **Progressive employment continues to be a very effective strategy in many ways. It is a great way for consumers to learn new job skills and build confidence. It is also a great way to educate employers about how a blind** person can use simple accommodations to accomplish essential functions of the work.
* The DBVI Director has been very involved with the Unified Plan for Vermont which will bring together all the workforce partners.
* Staff are learning about the potential partnerships to meet the need of individuals who are blind.

**Factors that continue to impede implementation include:**

* The covid-19 pandemic, social distancing, business shut down has significantly limited access to work-based learning opportunities with businesses.
* Typically partner programs are not fully accessible to individuals who are blind.
* DBVI believes the new partnerships through WIOA will lead to DBVI customers participating in the many partner programs of the Job Centers.

**Goal 5. DBVI will continue to implement highly effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students statewide.**

PY 2021 Measures:

* DBVI will expand services overall to youth. The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services will increase.
* DBVI will increase the number of students participating in pre-ETS services.

PY 2021 Targets:

* The percentage of population served under age 22 at entry into DBVI services will be 25% or higher.

PY 2019 and 2020 Update:

* The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services has grown from 17% of people served in SFY 2014 to 27% of people served in SFY 2020 and remains substantial at 25% in SFY 2021.

PY 2020 Pre-ETS Services:

* Total count of pre-ETS services was 95.
* Job Exploration Counseling was 2.
* Work-based Learning Experiences was 47.
* Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities was 2.
* Workplace Readiness Training was 36.
* Instruction in Self-Advocacy was 8.
* Count of Student with Disability was 31.
* Count of Student receiving pre-ETS who Applied was 20.

**Goal 6. DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).**

Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities and careers. Creative Workforce Solutions is the employer engagement and marketing arm of DVR. DVR measures employer engagement through the following three metrics:

* New Employer Contacts: These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS.
* Employer Activities: These are defined as engagement activities with employers who have an ongoing relationship with CWS.
* Employer Opportunities: These are defined as specific consumer opportunities such as a job opening, training opportunity, work-based learning opportunity, company tour or informational interview.

The annual targets for the CWS team for PY 2020 and PY 2021 are:

* Contacts: 750 new contacts per program year.
* Activities: 2,250 distinct engagement activities per program year.
* Opportunities: 2,500 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year.

The actual numbers for PY 2020 were:

* Contacts: 768
* Activities: 2,803
* Opportunities: 3,358

**Goal 7. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.**

DBVI recognizes that there continues to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

* Individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meet the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system of care priorities.
* Individuals with other severe disabilities, including individuals who are deaf-blind who need supported employment.

DBVI will partner with DVR to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders.

PY 2021 Measure:

* Number of individuals served who identified as minorities.
* Number of individuals served who received supported employment services.
* Number of individuals served with a disability impairment of "Deaf-blindness."

PY 2021 Target:

* Number of individuals served who identified as minorities will be 10%.
* Number of individuals served who received supported employment services will be 5.
* Number of individuals served with a disability impairment of "Deaf-blindness” will be 3.

PY 2019 and 2020 Update:

* There were 5 individuals served in PY 2019 and 3 individuals served in PY 2020 who received supported employment services.
* There were 3 individuals served in PY 2019 and 4 individuals served in PY 2020 with a disability impairment of “Deaf-blindness.”
* There were 9% (22 individuals) of the caseload who identified as minorities in PY 2019 and 10% (25 individuals) in PY 2020.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

* Key strategies involve effective outreach. Each region creates an inclusive regional outreach plan. Each region creates a strategy to reach out to their communities.
* It is very important to get high school students connected with SE programs before they graduate.
* DBVI provides a key role in the partnership with Developmental Services Agencies by bringing expertise in low vision and adaptive blindness skills.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

* The greatest challenge is getting a response from individuals who do not recognize the value of these services that can help them adapt to vision loss and find meaningful employment.
* The numbers for this population can vary greatly from year to year due to the low incidence of blindness. The key is for DBVI to stay closely connected with all visually impaired students in the state and act quickly with supported employment needs are anticipated.

**Goal 8. Consumer satisfaction with DBVI services will be maintained or increase.**

PY 2021 Measure:

* The survey instrument includes many questions to determine overall satisfaction with DBVI services and many subcategories of reporting that are used for program improvement.

PY 2021 Target:

* In the next Consumer Satisfaction Survey, at least 95% of respondents will report that they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.

PY 2020 Update:

The most recent customer satisfaction preliminary results of the 3-year statewide random survey of all participants in the DBVI Vocational Vision Rehabilitation program (Conducted by Market Decisions in December 2021:

* + 93% of respondents said they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.
  + 93% of respondents said overall, they are better off because of the services they received from DBVI.
  + 98% of respondents said that DBVI staff treated them with dignity and respect.
  + 97% of respondents said that DBVI helped them achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals,
  + 81% of respondents said that DBVI services met their expectations.
  + 91% of respondents said that DBVI vocational rehabilitation services helped them become more independent.
  + 94% of respondents said that DBVI helped them reach their job goals.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

* DBVI staff consistently delivers services well and help consumers to meet their goals and become better off.
* Staff are trained to use Customer-Centered Culture to obtain the Voice of the Customer as we develop strategies to accomplish desired results.
* Staff also use many of the practices in the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey to create goals, organize priorities, and effectively work with consumers by understanding their needs and developing a plan of services to accomplish their goals.

**Overall Program Results and Highlights**

# Recent Developments and Accomplishments

This year DBVI returned to in-person White Cane events. There were several events held in each of the DBVI regions. The intent is to educate the public about White Cane Safety Awareness. The white cane is a symbol of strength and independence, used by people who are blind as they travel independently. Many members of the public and community leaders usually attend to participate in a simulated walk in the community facilitated by an Orientation and Mobility instructor to increase the awareness of what it is like to travel with the white cane.

This year included a new type of event in Burlington. The theme was “you’re your own path” and it included a White Cane Awareness walk which led to a newly created sidewalk mural. Each line of the mural traces the actual strokes of the cane that a person uses while traveling to check the path for objects. There was very good media coverage which can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPFxaYyZTDc>

The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired received a second round of $100,000 of CRF funding to reduce social isolation of older Vermonters using smart phone technology with accessibility features. Ninety percent of all clients who completed services from July 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021, reported feeling less socially isolated and better off for having received SMART Services. Of those who did not report a change in their feelings of social isolation, the causes were due to extenuating circumstances not related to their vision or receipt of the

training. Clients who received benefit were able to accomplish at least one or more tasks, such as video conferencing with their doctor, video/teleconferencing with the PALS Groups, communicating with family and friends through various modes of technology, having groceries delivered, and more.

The importance and impact of the SMART program might be best understood by one of the success stories. A client in Southern Vermont has been a life-long poet and creative writer. Throughout her life she had enjoyed being a member of writers’ groups, attending poetry reads and writer’s coffee hours. Around the time that COVID-19 hit she was in the process of losing much of her sight. She found it very difficult to read her handwriting and was not able to attend the public reads due to lock downs. These groups migrated to the virtual platforms. Our teachers worked with her to help her begin to type her poetry and connect with video teleconferencing systems online. She was grateful to feel connected to her peers, but still struggled to read her poetry independently during the reading sessions. Then she was shown how she could use Voiceover on her iPhone to read her poetry out loud. She now joins the groups and turns on her phone’s ability to read her poetry aloud and the digital voice is part of her new form of art. She is independent, connected, and creative! There are many more success stories like this.

DBVI also partnered and assisted with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Vermont Transition Core Teams Virtual Conference. This statewide event brought together Transition Core Teams from schools and employment service providers to share ideas about how to assist students with disabilities with their employment goals.

DBVI has a commitment to ongoing training of staff to deliver services well. This year one staff member completed a certificate program at Mississippi State to gain a specialized credential for vocational counseling in the blindness specialty. Another staff member completed her master’s degree to be promoted to a Blind Services Rehabilitation Counselor.

# Future Directions

DBVI believes the best path forward includes a solid foundation in technology. Relevant new technologies emerge every day, and our staff stay current to help our customers achieve their employment and independence goals. One recent new technology is a new electronic Braille display keyboard, called the Mantis, that is sold by the American Printing House for the Blind. This electronic Braille display can be paired with an iPhone, Mac Computer, or Windows computer. This allows users to get Braille output while using a variety of devices. It also has a built-in word processor, calculator, and a library for reading Braille books and documents. This device makes it possible for extra productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

DBVI applied and was awarded an opportunity to join a learning collaborative with a focus on creating apprenticeship opportunities in a rural state. This was a competitive process and other states include Arkansas and Wyoming. The learning opportunities are facilitated by the team from UMass Boston in their Rural Apprenticeship Development program. It is a 5-year grant with the goal of creating apprenticeship opportunities for people who are blind in Vermont.

# Services to Students

DBVI has been very successful in expanding Pre-ETS services for students who are blind or visually impaired by providing work-experiences, internships, and job readiness training to build skills necessary for career development. Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) is a program developed by DBVI to achieve these goals.

Students participate in a slate of different options year-round to learn job readiness and self-advocacy skills, and to engage in work-based learning experiences.

The COVID-19 Pandemic offered LEAP a unique opportunity to rethink how we deliver programming. Following guidance from the CDC and Vermont Department of Health, LEAP was excited to provide both virtual and in person to students year-round.

The pandemic pushed us to be more creative and more innovative. We are proud to say that we now offer programs both in person and virtual that allow for more flexibility to students and families. Before the pandemic, LEAP was primarily a summer residential program. Now we offer programming nearly every season, either in person or virtual.

All programs focused on work-based learning experiences, job readiness skills and self-advocacy skill training including but not limited to effective communication, independence, mobility, and time management.

With COVID regulations and precautions continuing through 2021, LEAP developed several unique virtual Work Based Learning programs throughout the year. And with increasing vaccination rates, LEAP organized in person day-time work experiences during the year at Business Enterprise Program (BEP) cafes, and summer work experiences in Burlington, Barre, and Norwich, Vermont.

For the first time in 2021, LEAP offered in person work experiences to students in their communities. A student in Norwich was placed at King Arthur Flour in a work experience in their bakery.

**“SkillShops”**was designed in 2021 for students who may not have been ready or willing to commit to a work experience but wanted access to daily training in soft employment skills, orientation and mobility, independent living, career development, and more.

LEAP included STEM opportunities in its programming, including a solar panel tracking summer curriculum, and a Coding Work Based Learning Program.

The Virtual Work-based Learning opportunities included

* Social Media Internship partnering with Vermont Center for Independent Living and Vermont Community Garden Network. Students developed strategies to improve their social media presence. Interns created a structured proposal to plan out posting schedules, content, and branding under the supervision of Sophia Rabe of Olive and Milo Company.
* Coding Internship with Dr. Stephanie Ludi, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, *University of North Texas.*
* Reporting with Becky Holt from *Vermont Story Lab*
* Storytelling with Sue Schmidt from *The Vermont Moth*; The participants produced either a recorded story, or a social media post about their interviewee for ReSOURCE.
* Education and Facilitation Internship in which students coordinated and planned our weekly Friday Retreats
* Grant Writing supervised by Bethany Johnson, Director of HR with ReSOURCE. Students were trained in grant writing and applied for two grants for ReSOURCE and the LEAP Program.

**Total Training Hours, LEAP 2021**

Virtual Work Based Learning Programs: 1,477

In Person Work Based Learning Programs: 452

Friday Retreats: 86

Orientation and Mobility with a COMS: 57

Independent Living Skills with a CVRT: 45

Social, Leadership and Self Advocacy: 87

In 2021, our training hours in Virtual and In Person Work Based Learning Programs went up by 916 hours. This was due to a significant focus on placing students in hands on work-based learning experiences with community employers.

Our weekly virtual workshop (Friday Retreats, O&M, Independent Living Skills, Self-Advocacy, etc.) numbers went down as students were back in school in 2021 and had more in person after school activities. We scaled back our weekly workshops offerings as COVID restrictions were lifted and offered more in person opportunities.

In the ever-growing virtual world, LEAP had the opportunity to connect with people across the country. Students experienced meeting and engaging with professionals who are blind or visually impaired and succeeding in their careers.

In 2022, we will continue to offer in person community day programming, virtual programming, and a return to residential programming. These options will provide students more opportunities to engage in work-based learning experiences that meet their needs.

LEAP is no longer only a summer residential program. It is a flexible, creative, and forward-thinking program that offers students and families a flexible year-round to learn self-advocacy, job readiness skills and hands on work-based learning opportunities.

We are proud to serve our students and look forward to 2022.

**Quotes from 2021 LEAP Students**

“I felt like I accomplished something that I haven't done before. I was able to put the timesheet in, interview a few people, learned how to ask questions more specifically, learned to manage my time so I could do a lot of things and work from home.” - LEAP summer, 2021 Reporting Intern

“LEAP pushed me to be more open and brave about speaking out and interacting with other people.” - LEAP summer, 2021 Coding Program Intern

“Seeing the results of my work was magical. Watching the engagement go up on LEAP's Instagram and seeing my webpage come to life made me feel like I was working towards something great and was learning along the way.” - LEAP summer, 2021 Social Media Intern

“I loved every aspect of the program. I felt it was engaging. Because it was such a fun and interactive experience, it made all the learning and research fun too. I appreciated the fact that the team meetings provided us with the opportunity to socialize and get to know one another, in addition to learning and growing with one another… I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment when sharing and teaching others.” - LEAP fall 2020, Interview Project Intern

“I think my greatest accomplishment for the LEAP program was how to advocate more for myself. I have a hard time speaking for myself and speaking up. During this program I was able to share emails, speak up some more during classes and meetings, I also got the experience to lead a team meeting which helped me more.” - LEAP fall 2020, Interview Project Intern

“I want to thank all of you for a wonderful time here in the LEAP program with such wonderful friends and staff. The LEAP program is filled with the greatest happiest atmosphere. I really feel like I have come away from this summer program and this past fall program with new friends.” - LEAP summer 2021, SkillShops Participant

DBVI staff work towards continuous improvement by listening to the voice of customers and using that information and data to improve performance. An updated DBVI State Plan with new goals and strategies was completed and approved by the State Rehabilitation Council in February 2020 and can be found at [**https://dbvi.vermont.gov/resources/publications**](https://dbvi.vermont.gov/resources/publications). Please also visit the success story link on the DBVI website at [**www.dbvi.vermont.gov**](http://www.dbvi.vermont.gov) to see examples of people reaching their goals.

## p. 1. B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities

#### Current Narrative:

See Above (P.1.A.).

## p. 2. A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals

## Current Narrative:

See Above (P.1.A.).

## p. 2. B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities

#### Current Narrative:

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

#### Current Narrative:

Vermont’s DVR and DBVI programs also received data for the first time on all five WIOA Common Performance Measures and how we compared to national averages. This data shows that:

* Vermont VR consumers are achieving all outcomes at a higher rate than the national average on all five performance measures.
* The employment rate two quarters post exit improved continues to improve, moving from 49% in SFY 2019 to 51.1% in SFY 2020 to 53.5% in SFY 2021.
* The median earnings two quarters post exit increased jumped from being below the national average in SFY 2020 to being above it in SFY 2021, with an increase from $3,901 in SFY 2020 to $4,630 in SFY 2021.

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

#### Current Narrative:

See strategies about LEAP in (P.1.A.) above. Some I&E funds were also utilized to support the Statewide Independent Living Council activities as DBVI is the designated state entity.