



## Minnesota (MN) WIOA Matrix

### Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP)

No specific disability related information found.

### Customized Employment

3) provide technical assistance to non-integrated employment programs to design new business models that lead to competitive employment in the most integrated setting, and

4) provide information about effective employment strategies, such as supported and customized employment, that make competitive employment possible for individuals with complex and significant disabilities. (Page 254)

SSB has allocated approximately \$41,000 in funds for FFY16 for youth with disabilities who required extended services. There are two supported employment youth populations within SSB:

- Those youth who were already determined by SSB or the Department of Education to be competitively employable in an integrated setting who will/may require extended services, and
- Those youth where in the past, shelter workshops, enclaves, and other non-competitive, segregated settings would have been identified as possible options. For all youth who are already identified as supported employment candidates, a supported employment plan is required. The plan identifies the extended services required for that youth and who would be providing those extended services. Collaboration with extended service providers occurs, and a negotiation happens with who picks up the cost and when. With four years allowed for the VR agency to provide those extended services, this allows time for the families to get set up with waiver programs and natural supports. The extended services activities that are provided by SSB (and subsequently the extended service provider when it becomes available) under the supported employment plan include:
  - Customized employment, including job carving, employer negotiation
  - Social skills training
  - Job coaching
  - Development of natural supports on the job (Pages 319-320)

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### Braiding/Blending Resources

SSB, in conjunction with the SRC-B is committed to the following priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs:

#### **FOCUS AREA: JOBS, MORE JOBS, BETTER JOBS**

- Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by 3% from the previous year.

#### ◆ **Strategies:**

- ? Annual review of customer base with counselors and develop targeted plans for those in “ready for employment” status.
  - ? Complete revision of intake process including materials, training for staff, and incorporation of an intake overview training for customers.
  - ? Ensuring applicants fully understand the benefits of competitive integrated employment.
  - ? Work with Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Olmstead interagency workgroup focused on blending and braiding funding that allow access to extended services for the long term supports needed for customers for desiring employment.
  - ? Active participation in the State interagency workgroup promoting the Governor’s executive order to improve hiring persons with disabilities in state government to 7%. SSB provides technical assistance to HR Directors, Accessibility Coordinators, and IT staff in accommodations, reviews software and hardware issues, and makes recommendations to the Governor and his staff of steps that can be taken to improve hiring.
- Increase the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes from 55% to 70%.
- #### ◆ **Strategies:**
- ? Regularly analyze data of unsuccessful closures to determine trends, issues and opportunities. From that develop plans to mitigate those problems.
  - ? Implement the new intake process so individuals have a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties when entering the public vocational rehabilitation program.
- Implement the primary indicators of performance under section 116. (Page 312)

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### Section 188/Section 188 Guide

**The ADA Site Selection Criteria and Access Standards** – The standards were developed to assess the accessibility of potential WorkForce Center (WFC) locations and identify the building elements that are critical to program access. The standards address the obligation by all WFC partners under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). (Page 121-122)

### DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

Minnesota learned that as a state, we were already doing a great deal around alignment and partnership. Minnesota has been recognized as a leader and early adaptor in career pathways, Minnesota FastTRAC program. This program brought together Adult Basic Education, workforce (WIA Adult, DSW, Youth, TAA), higher education (CTE, Perkins), and industry to develop curriculum and programming to move individuals to receive education attainment. Minnesota learned from experience that there was more to be done in order to reach and serve individuals with barriers. This work has expanded and evidenced through our DEI grant (serving individuals with disabilities), Pipeline project (serving youth and CTE students), incarcerated or recently released individuals, homeless, individuals exiting chemical dependency programs, and veterans faced with difficulty facing re-entry. (Page 42)

WorkForce Centers (WFCs) serve a significant number of people with disabilities beyond the customers served by VRS and SSB. The needs assessment indicated that notable progress has been made toward achieving universal design; almost 100 percent of survey respondents indicated they felt WFC resources were universally available. However, WFCs need to articulate and better disseminate information about their program access. VRS provides consultation to the WFCs' Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) federal grant to serve youth in transition and adults. (Page 257)

### Other State Programs/Pilots that Support Competitive Integrated Employment

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to assist In-School Youth with disabilities. Three pilot sites will be established in Rural Minnesota CEP, Anoka County and Southwest Minnesota in April of 2016 (will expand to other Local Workforce Development Areas at later date). The pilot sites will provide direct services in the form of work experience, introduction to career pathways and support services to VRS-eligible youth ages 14–21, who are attending secondary school (including alternative schools). The pilot sites will demonstrate effective intra-agency collaboration and local partnerships, best practices and co-enrollment strategies that can be shared across states and local youth workforce system providers and youth-serving agencies.
2. Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide youth employment services to Teen Parents, 16 through 24 years of age, who are receiving Minnesota Family Investment (MFIP) benefits; and Youth ages 14 through 18, who are on the grant in the MFIP household. Thirteen Local Workforce Development Areas will participate projects that focus on work readiness, work experience, introduction to career pathways and preparation of youth for long-term employment. (Page 148)

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In 2012 a Next Generation Placement Design Team was developed, consisting of 18 key VRS and CRP leaders who engaged in a facilitated process to develop the 'Next Generation' of placement services for the benefit of job seekers and employers. The model was piloted in each region of the state (northern, metro, and southern) and at the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Units in St. Paul and St. Cloud. The model is currently being expanded statewide to all geographic areas of the state and all VR communities (VRS, community rehabilitation programs and limited use vendors). (Page 220)

VRS and CRPs in Minnesota continue to make a concerted effort to work in partnership to serve VR consumers. Placement 101, a foundational training program in job placement for new VRS and CRP placement staff is offered on a quarterly basis with an average of 18 participants in attendance. The training design team also developed a training program on Business Engagement; implementation is pending infrastructure enhancements that will enable the rehabilitation community to successfully meet the needs of businesses. Training on a VRS initiated pilot project "Next Generation Placement" concluded in 2015; the pilot is designed to implement and assess the effectiveness of an enhanced team approach to providing job placement services. (Page 233)

This system involves a group orientation and clear, consistent messaging. This workgroup is still in the process of implementation. SSB as a whole will be piloting a group orientation for any new referrals to enhance the effort for individuals to make an informed choice regarding their intent to achieve an employment outcome. This orientation will be designed to meet the needs of all incoming referrals, regardless of culture or disability. In the area of increasing partnerships, WDU has developed relationships with Gillette Hospital and Ecolab to increase the likelihood of employment outcomes. We have achieved three successful employment outcomes from these employer relationships. WDU's employment team is actively involved in Statewide Placement Partnerships that has resulted in approximately seven successful employment outcomes. The Statewide Placement Partnerships include VRS and other employment agencies throughout the state. WDU is working collaboratively with VRS on a model Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Administration, and the Department of Corrections. The MOU indicates that if a vocational rehabilitation applicant meets the minimum qualifications, they are guaranteed an interview with the department. WDU and VRS are working together on the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), which is managed by the National Employment Team. WDU hired a transition coordinator. (Page 328)

The third goal seeks to develop and maintain a positive work environment by developing and implementing a team oriented model of customer service, ongoing customer support and training plan for the assistive technology team, and hiring practices that reflect the customer base served. SSB formed a workgroup to research, develop, and implement a team approach to service delivery. The purpose of the team approach is to increase the probability of success for customers by offering a structure that provides the maximum support to a counselor and their caseload. This approach was piloted to WDU staff, and there is now an approximately 85% participation rate. The goal is to have 100% of staff involved in the team approach for FFY16. Recommendations from the SSB Assistive Technology Workgroup have identified strategies which were recently approved by SSB senior management. Strategies focus on 3 areas including: SSB making the commitment to be "The Model" for accessibility standards; adopting and implementing the Customer Environment Task Tool (CETT) framework of how we approach students at the beginning of their vocational rehabilitation process; and providing customers with multiple training options. The WDU Assistive Technology staff are now working to implement them. The CETT is based on the SETT Framework by Joy Zabala. (Page 329)

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### Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

**Minnesota Youth Program (MYP)** – This program provides comprehensive services to prepare at-risk youth, ages 14 to 24, for the world of work, including: career exploration and planning, labor market information on in-demand occupations, work readiness skills, financial literacy training and quality work experience opportunities. MYP is available in all 87 counties; strong local partnerships are in place with oversight from local Workforce Development Boards/Youth Committees. The Outreach to Schools/Career Advisor component of MYP provides cost-effective strategies for delivering career and labor market information to in-school youth. MYP is a state-funded program. (Page 69)

The WIOA Young Adult Program serves at-risk youth, ages 16–24, who are not attending any school, and in-school youth, ages 14–21, who are low-income and at-risk. WIOA improves job and career options for youth through an integrated, job-driven workforce system that supports the development of strong regional economies. WIOA Youth program elements include: dropout recovery and prevention; paid and unpaid work experience; tutoring; occupational skills training; leadership development, mentoring; comprehensive guidance and counseling; financial literacy education; entrepreneurial skills training; tutoring; study skills training; entrepreneurial skills training; labor market information on in-demand industry sectors/occupations; alternative secondary school services; education offered with workforce preparation activities and training; support services and follow up. (Page 148)

- Classroom presentation skills training based on the state’s Creative Job Search workshop will continue to be offered to all employees who facilitate workshops.
  - All Job Service employees have access to the Skill-soft online training platform. Training specific to each employee is documented in the employee’s Individual Development Plan.
  - Ongoing training in the areas of dealing with diverse populations, accessibility, safety, and financial literacy will continue to be offered to all employees. (Page 155)
- \* **SGA Project:** the Institute on Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts – Boston has received RSA funding to demonstrate effective strategies to assist SSDI beneficiaries achieve income above the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. Minnesota VRS is one of the demonstration sites. At time of enrollment, the SSDI beneficiary is assigned a counselor, placement specialist and financial specialist. Eligibility for services is presumed within three days and the Employment Plan is developed within 30 days of application. VRS has partnered with the DLL to provide financial counseling in VR offices. RSA funding was used to provide the benefits planners with financial literacy training so that in addition to benefits planning the financial specialists can provide assistance with improving credits scores, paying off credit card debt, and developing savings plans. It is hoped that the combination of rapid engagement and financial planning services will lead to better outcomes. Although the SGA Project does not receive any Medicaid funding, the financial specialist positions would not have been possible without the initial collaboration with the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. (Page 223)

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### Benefits

Overall, people felt the collaborative was very helpful for prioritizing what needs to be addressed first, Social Security benefits counseling, learning about community services, independent living skills, and learning advocacy skills.

The SRC and VRS have reviewed the notes of the discussion groups to help determine staff training needs. More emphasis needs to be placed on teaching self-advocacy skills. Several people mentioned they would have benefited from specific services but never asked for the services. People were appreciative of the team approach (VRS staff, IL staff and CRP staff co-located) but some people presumed everyone was employed by VRS. It is important that everyone is aware that VR provides choice of vendor and you don't need to select the co-located staff. VRS needs to look at better ways to disengage when the person is successfully employed and does not need long-term supports. The information about post-employment services needs to be more inviting. (Page 205)

**The SGA Project:** The Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts-Boston is conducting RSA funded research on best practices for assisting SSDI beneficiaries achieve employment above Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). The VR agencies in Minnesota and Kentucky are currently demonstrating this rapid engagement model where eligibility is determined within three days; within seven days transferable work skills are identified, labor market information is presented to the consumer, and benefits and financial planning services are started; and within 30 days the IPE and a Placement Plan are developed. A benefits analysis is completed within 8 weeks of application if needed. RSA demonstration grant funding is being used to provide SSDI beneficiaries' access to a financial specialist to help the person know how income will impact federal and state benefits, and how work incentives and VR services can help improve credit scores and provide savings that can be used as a down-payment on a home or to purchase reliable transportation, etc. Minnesota hopes to demonstrate that rapid engagement and holistic services will lead to more placements at higher wages. (Page 208)

**The Minnesota STAR (System of Technology to Achieve Results) Program:** The STAR Program, a program within the Minnesota Department of Administration, is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. Vocational Rehabilitation often refers people to STAR for a device demonstration. This allows consumers to compare benefits and features of a particular device or category of devices. Once a decision on a device is made, the person can borrow the device for 30 days to make sure it meets the person's needs before VR purchases the item. VR also maintains an agreement with STAR to provide VR assistive technology specialists with commonly used devices for use in doing assessments with consumers. (Page 209)

- \* **Disability Linkage Line (DLL):** The DLL is a partnership between DHS and the Centers for Independent Living to provide disability related information and referral resources for Minnesotans with disabilities. Assistance is available in the areas of accessible housing, personal care services, transportation, employment, disability benefits, assistive technology, and other community resources. Services are available through a toll free number or online at [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info). The most recent expansion of the DLL has been in the area of benefits planning and benefits analysis for beneficiaries of Social Security benefits. (Page 222)



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**Disability Benefits 101:** DB101 ([www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org)) is a free online service operated by the Disability Linkage Line that was initially developed using Medicaid Infrastructure grant funding. The program allows people to plan for their future by providing estimator sessions showing how income will impact benefits, explores effective use of work incentives, helps people establish work goals, and provides answers to questions through live chat, phone or email. The program includes short videos of success stories. Many of the DLL staff are certified Community Work Incentive Coordinators and can provide benefits analysis services if there are complex issues. Utilizing Department of Labor – Disability Employment Initiative funding, a new section on Work Benefits for Youth has been added. In addition to VRS and SSB staff being actively involved in the development of the online program, consumers were actively involved in the BETA testing to make sure the program was accessible to people with disabilities. (Page 223)

Vocational Rehabilitation is showing continuous improvement in the number of participants from minority backgrounds. Individuals who are Black/African American represent 5.4% of the state population, 12.8% of the VR caseload, and 11.6% of VR's successful closures. Individuals who are Hispanic/Latino represent 4.8% of the state population, 4.0% of the VR caseload, and 3.4% of VR's successful closures. American Indians represent 1.0% of the state population, 2.5% of the VR caseload, and 1.2% of the successful closures. Asians represent 4.8% of the state population, 2.4% of the VR caseload, and 2.4% of the successful closures. Research suggests blacks and American Indians experience disability at a higher rate than other cultural/ethnic groups. VRS needs to continue active outreach to minorities to assure equal access to the benefits of VR services. (Page 236)

About 40 percent of VRS applicants receive SSA benefits. VRS was instrumental in establishing the Work Incentives Connection, a program of Goodwill Industries that provides work incentives planning and assistance for consumers and work incentives training for VRS staff. (Page 256)

Minnesota has been selected by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts – Boston as a demonstration site for the RSA funded demonstration grant to improve employment outcomes for VR customers who are SSDI beneficiaries (“The SGA Project”). Minnesota VRS is working closely with the ICI to promote rehabilitation counseling techniques that promote consumer engagement, provide early access to financial planning and benefits planning services, and provides early job development activities. Goals include presuming eligibility within 3 days, holding a meeting with the consumer to start benefits planning and to discuss Labor Market information within 7 days, and to implement the Employment Plan within 30 days. (Page 256)

B1. All VRS managers, counselors and VR Technicians Seniors will have attended four informational sessions on Social Security work incentives and benefits planning by the end of FFY 2015.

**Progress to Date:** All teams participated in training on Developing PASS Plans and a Disability Benefits 101 refresher. New employees participated in benefits planning training provided by local WIPA staff. An advanced course on benefits planning was also offered to all staff. VRS is one of the sites for the Institute for Community Inclusion's SGA Project. (Page 259)

Medicaid will apply the payment to the consumer's spenddown. Minnesota's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant was a joint project of the Department of Human Services, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (VRS and SSB) and the State Council on Disability.

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Collaborative efforts started utilizing grant funding has been continued using state appropriations, including:

- **Disability Linkage Line (DLL):** The DLL is a partnership between DHS and the Centers for Independent Living to provide disability related information and referral resources for Minnesotans with disabilities. Assistance is available in the areas of accessible housing, personal care services, transportation, employment, disability benefits, assistive technology, and other community resources. Services are available through a toll free number or online at [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info). The most recent expansion of the DLL has been in the area of benefits planning and benefits analysis for beneficiaries of Social Security benefits.
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SSB, in conjunction with the SRC-B is committed to the following priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs:

### FOCUS AREA: JOBS, MORE JOBS, BETTER JOBS

- Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by 3% from the previous year.
  - o **Strategies:**
    - ? Annual review of customer base with counselors and develop targeted plans for those in “ready for employment” status.
    - ? Complete revision of intake process including materials, training for staff, and incorporation of an intake overview training for customers.
    - ? Ensuring applicants fully understand the benefits of competitive integrated employment. ? Work with Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Olmstead interagency workgroup focused on blending and braiding funding that allow access to extended services for the long term supports needed for customers for desiring employment.
    - ? Active participation in the State interagency workgroup promoting the Governor’s executive order to improve hiring persons with disabilities in state government to 7%. SSB provides technical assistance to HR Directors, Accessibility Coordinators, and IT staff in accommodations, reviews software and hardware issues, and makes recommendations to the Governor and his staff of steps that can be taken to improve hiring.



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- Increase the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes from 55% to 70%.

### o Strategies:

- ? Regularly analyze data of unsuccessful closures to determine trends, issues and opportunities. From that develop plans to mitigate those problems. (Page 312)

There are 5 specific areas that SSB is targeting to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities. They are:

- Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by 3% from the previous year.

### o Methods used will include:

- ? Annual review of customer base with counselors and develop targeted plans for those in “ready for employment” status.
  - ? Complete revision of intake process including materials, training for staff, and incorporation of an intake overview training for customers.
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  - ? Implement the new intake process so individuals have a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties when entering the public vocational rehabilitation program. (Page 321)

Supported employment services promoting the integration of people with the most severe disabilities into employment in Minnesota have become increasingly available. The scope and

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quality of supported employment services have improved as more entities become aware of the benefits of ongoing employment supports for individuals with the most significant disabilities. However, the demand for supported employment exceeds the capacity of systems in Minnesota to provide the necessary extended ongoing employment supports. In addition to the goals for Title VI Part B described in Section N, SSB will continue to engage in capacity building and technical assistance efforts with other state agencies and community service providers. For example, SSB is working with the Minnesota Department of Human Services regarding the need for ongoing employment supports for individuals who are DeafBlind. SSB counselors have had some success working with county social workers to obtain waiver funding for those ongoing supports. (Page 332)

**Eligibility** An applicant for MFIP or for DWP must meet the eligibility requirements specified in Minnesota Statutes Sections 256J.01 through 256J.95 before receiving benefits and services. All requirements under Section 408 of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 are included in Minnesota law. Assistance is provided equitably to all program recipients in accordance with State and Federal law. Neither MFIP nor DWP requires basis of eligibility tests, such as the previous AFDC 100-hour rule requirement for two-parent families. The asset limit for both programs is \$2,000 for applicants and \$5,000 for participants. The trade-in value limit on the first licensed vehicle excluded in determining eligibility is \$10,000. In addition, the combined loan value of all other vehicles must be less than or equal to \$7,500. For MFIP and DWP, statewide payment standards are based on the number of eligible persons in the assistance unit. Persons convicted of a drug offense committed after July 1, 1997 may receive cash assistance subject to the conditions set forth in Minnesota Statutes 256J.26. (Page 431)

## School to Work Transition

**\* Way to Work Project:** Also referred to as the Ohio model, VRS has placed vocational rehabilitation counselors in a sheltered workshop to assess consumer needs and develop strategies to move the employees from segregated employment to competitive integrated employment. Dakota County, the Department of Human Services and VRS are studying effective ways to provide training, supports and benefits planning to assist people transition into the community. (Page 224)

With the greater emphasis on providing pre-employment transition services, VRS staff have reached out to local school districts across the state to identify how transition students are currently able to access community-based work-based learning opportunities and what gaps need to be filled. In many instances, there are work-based learning coordinators, hired by the school district, that have at least some employer relationships within the community. However, many of these coordinators report that they don't always have the time or expertise to form the breadth of relationships that meets the needs of all students. VRS is working collaboratively with these coordinators to create a structure for connecting them to employer relationships and job leads created/ identified by the regional placement partnerships and to revise and deliver the Placement 101 training in order to meet the unique needs of these school staff members. On the flip side, where there aren't work-based learning coordinators available to students, VRS is identifying alternative options to work with employers to offer students work experiences. First, VRS and three Workforce Investment Board Title I Youth programs are currently piloting a way to collaboratively identify students in need of paid work-based learning experiences and connect them to employers to provide these experiences at integrated work settings in the community. In these 12-week experiences, students will gain confidence and skills to help propel them along career pathways. As many as 50 students will be

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served with this model. Furthermore, VRS is working with Community Rehabilitation Providers on various opportunities as well. These include job shadows, job try-outs, internships, and full and part-time jobs. Lastly, VRS has both internal and contracted job placement positions that are re-directing their time within VRS offices to focus more intentionally on partnering with employers to offer these opportunities as well. (Page 221)

The Minnesota Department of Education, several local school districts, the Title 1 Youth programs and VRS is currently conducting this assessment to determine how to provide cost effective coordinated transition career services and pre-employment transition services. The pilot activities are described in the section on youth with disabilities. (Page 238)

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The Community Rehabilitation Advisory Committee meets an average of six times per year. There has been substantial discussion this year on deepening and strengthening collaboration. Activities included co-hosting a statewide community partners meeting, sharing an understanding of WIOA regulations regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services and the impact this will have on VRS and CRPs, discussing a pilot program at ProAct (a center-based employment site) that will help transform centered-based programs to competitive integrated work opportunities, and providing an effective conduit for sharing important information with community providers and consumers. (Page 262)

SSB committee that developed a more meaningful reporting tool with the vendor. As required by statute, SSB contracts with three CRPs to provide the minimum of six weeks intensive training

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under sleep shades from an adjustment to blindness center for Rehabilitation Counselors. Contracts have also been developed with CRPs to provide transition programs to students. Services are meant to augment work done by school districts with activities on evenings and weekends. Additionally, SSB has implemented “Vendor Forums” twice per year as an opportunity to provide updates about agency happenings, discuss trends in findings from monitoring visits and provide training on pertinent topics such as data practices, navigating the state system for job placement and assistive technology. In the area of assistive technology, vendors were part of a pilot program which tested a new curriculum and reporting tool for technology training. That curriculum and reporting tool have since been adopted as standard procedure. In the summer of 2015, a request for proposal (RFP) was released to the public to provide programming to transition students during the school year in the evenings and weekends designed to augment/supplement training they are receiving in school. Beginning on October 2015, SSB awarded two Adjustment To Blindness training centers contracts to provide these services. (Page 292)

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One case, this has led to a vendor/SSB committee that developed a more meaningful reporting tool with the vendor. As required by statute, SSB contracts with three CRPs to provide the minimum of six weeks intensive training under sleep shades from an adjustment to blindness center for Rehabilitation Counselors. Contracts have also been developed with CRPs to provide transition programs to students. Services are meant to augment work done by school districts with activities on evenings and weekends. Additionally, SSB has implemented “Vendor Forums” twice per year as an opportunity to provide updates about agency happenings, discuss trends in findings from monitoring visits and provide training on pertinent topics such as data practices, navigating the state system for job placement and assistive technology. In the area of assistive technology, vendors were part of a pilot program which tested a new curriculum and reporting tool for technology training. That curriculum and reporting tool have since been adopted as standard procedure. In the summer of 2015, a request for proposal (RFP) was released to the public to provide programming to transition students during the school year in the evenings and weekends designed to augment/supplement training they are receiving in school. Beginning on October 2015, SSB awarded two Adjustment To Blindness training centers contracts to provide these services. (Page 292)

### **FOCUS AREA: SSB-A Great Place to Work**

- Increase the numbers of individuals hired by SSB that reflect the customer base served by 3.
- **Strategies:**
  - ? All SSB job postings have a preferred qualification of fluency in a second language.

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? All individuals meeting the required qualifications and are flagged as “special population” defined by Human Resources are granted an interview.

? SSB will participate in the Connect 700 Hour program for the State of Minnesota.

? All postings are sent to consumer groups for broad dissemination.

? SSB will hire at least 3 student workers who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind.

- Implement the accepted Assistive Technology workgroup recommendation by piloting CETT (Customer Evaluation of Technology and Training) by December 31, 2016. Implement strengths based meeting framework within the team model process by December 31, 2016. (Page 313)

This system involves a group orientation and clear, consistent messaging. This workgroup is still in the process of implementation. SSB as a whole will be piloting a group orientation for any new referrals to enhance the effort for individuals to make an informed choice regarding their intent to achieve an employment outcome. This orientation will be designed to meet the needs of all incoming referrals, regardless of culture or disability. In the area of increasing partnerships, WDU has developed relationships with Gillette Hospital and Ecolab to increase the likelihood of employment outcomes. We have achieved three successful employment outcomes from these employer relationships. WDU’s employment team is actively involved in Statewide Placement Partnerships that has resulted in approximately seven successful employment outcomes. The Statewide Placement Partnerships include VRS and other employment agencies throughout the state. WDU is working collaboratively with VRS on a model Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Administration, and the Department of Corrections. The MOU indicates that if a vocational rehabilitation applicant meets the minimum qualifications, they are guaranteed an interview with the department. WDU and VRS are working together on the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), which is managed by the National Employment Team. WDU hired a transition coordinator. (Page 328)

The third goal seeks to develop and maintain a positive work environment by developing and implementing a team oriented model of customer service, ongoing customer support and training plan for the assistive technology team, and hiring practices that reflect the customer base served. SSB formed a workgroup to research, develop, and implement a team approach to service delivery. The purpose of the team approach is to increase the probability of success for customers by offering a structure that provides the maximum support to a counselor and their caseload. This approach was piloted to WDU staff, and there is now an approximately 85% participation rate. The goal is to have 100% of staff involved in the team approach for FFY16. Recommendations from the SSB Assistive Technology Workgroup have identified strategies which were recently approved by SSB senior management. Strategies focus on 3 areas including: SSB making the commitment to be “The Model” for accessibility standards; adopting and implementing the Customer Environment Task Tool (CETT) framework of how we approach students at the beginning of their vocational rehabilitation process; and providing customers with multiple training options. The WDU Assistive Technology staff are now working to implement them. The CETT is based on the SETT Framework by Joy Zabala. (Page 329)

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### Data Collection

No specific disability related information found

### Small Business/Entrepreneurship

\* The SRC advised that VR continue to support outreach to employers, including small businesses. VR has a unique and important role assuring small businesses are aware of ADA, on-the-job training, work opportunity tax credits, etc. (Page 203)

**State Use Program:** Since the mid-1990s, Minnesota state agencies have been legislatively encouraged to purchase goods and services from small businesses operated by individuals with disabilities. In 2007, the Legislature enacted a set-aside program, providing that 19 percent of the total value of all state janitorial contracts be awarded to community rehabilitation organizations approved by VRS as service providers under the VRS Extended Employment Program. During the 2010 legislative session, the set-aside program was expanded to include document imaging, document shredding, mailing, collating, and sorting services. Further, the amount of each contract awarded under this section may exceed the estimated fair market price for the same goods and services by up to 6 percent. (Page 209)

VRS has offered several in-service programs to enhance counselor skills in assessment and employment planning including Assessing the Ability to Benefit, Assistive Technology basics, Small Business Plans, Social Security Work Incentives and Supported Employment. Transition Counselors noted that a program “Understanding Special Education Evaluation Summary Reports” was extremely impactful on their ability to do meaningful assessments and plans. (Page 233)

Minnesota will continue the customized training component with the small businesses that are the primary private sector employers of SCSEP participants. Over the last decade, small businesses have generated 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually. In many areas, small businesses may be the only source of jobs for job seekers, particularly when those workers are low-income and elderly. Working with small business employers to provide customized training has proven to be a successful placement model; sub grantees can replicate this model in new and current SCSEP areas.

Transition into unsubsidized jobs at worksite agencies is one method of meeting the 54.3 percent Entered Employment goal. SCSEP staff encourages host agencies to hire participants when permanent positions become available. Another placement method includes the use of a job developer who obtains job openings information or referrals to local Job Service offices who make the placements of SCSEP participants. (Page 498)

### Career Pathways

**Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Career Pathways** – Beginning in 2014, Minnesota’s DEI project supports job-driven approaches in career pathway systems and programs to equip youth and adults with disabilities (including individuals with significant disabilities) with the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to help them obtain in-demand jobs, increase earnings, and



## Minnesota (MN) WIOA Matrix

advance their careers. Three Local Workforce Development Areas operate career pathways in manufacturing, health care, and information technology sectors. Disability Resources Coordinators work to strengthen partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, disability agencies, and employers and modify career pathway education and employment for individual success. (Page 71)

129. Partnerships and Development of Career Pathways: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways. (Page 111)

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to assist In-School Youth with disabilities. Three pilot sites will be established in Rural Minnesota CEP, Anoka County and Southwest Minnesota in April of 2016 (will expand to other Local Workforce Development Areas at later date). The pilot sites will provide direct services in the form of work experience, introduction to career pathways and support services to VRS-eligible youth ages 14-21, who are attending secondary school (including alternative schools). The pilot sites will demonstrate effective intra-agency collaboration and local partnerships, best practices and co-enrollment strategies that can be shared across states and local youth workforce system providers and youth-serving agencies. (Page 148)

VRS is identifying alternative options to work with employers to offer students work experiences. First, VRS and three Workforce Investment Board Title I Youth programs are currently piloting a way to collaboratively identify students in need of paid work-based learning experiences and connect them to employers to provide these experiences at integrated work settings in the community. In these 12-week experiences, students will gain confidence and skills to help propel them along career pathways. As many as 50 students will be served with this model. Furthermore, VRS is working with Community Rehabilitation Providers on various opportunities as well. These include job shadows, job try-outs, internships, and full and part-time jobs. Lastly, VRS has both internal and contracted job placement positions that are re-directing their time within VRS offices to focus more intentionally on partnering with employers to offer these opportunities as well. (Page 221)

VRS staff have reached out to local school districts across the state to identify how transition students are currently able to access community work-based learning opportunities and what gaps need to be filled. In many instances, there are work-based learning coordinators hired by the school district that have at least some employer relationships within the community. However, many of these coordinators report that they don't always have the time or expertise to form the breadth of relationships that meets the needs of all students. VRS is currently developing a structure to share job leads developed by the VRS/CRP Placement Partnerships, and plan are being made to offer the Placement 101 training curriculum to school personnel. VRS and three Title 1 Youth programs are piloting a model where students will participate in a 12 week paid work experience to gain confidence and encourage development of career pathways. VRS is also working with CRPs to develop more opportunities for job shadows, job try-outs, internships and integrated competitive placements. It is anticipated that these pilot projects will lead to a model to better serve youth with disabilities in both the WIOA Title 1 youth programs and VRS. (Page 237)

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DHS/DEED staff will continue to work with Mr. LaPlante and his staff to discuss potential SNAP E&T opportunities with each reservation utilizing FFP at the 75 percent rate. Tribal Reservations will be encouraged, with DHS/DEED assistance, to develop local programs designed to provide volunteer SNAP E&T services/activities to their members. As these programs develop, they will be added to this SNAP E&T Plan and submitted for approval to FNS. DEED is currently working with the Northwest Indian Occupational Industrialization Center (OIC) which was provided a Career Pathways grant to provide Career Pathways opportunities for Indians residing on or off the reservations. We hope to expand this project to other areas along with increasing Adult Basic Education (ABE) to better reach and serve this population. (Page 461)

## Employment Networks

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services: Memorandum of Understanding to enhance work opportunities for veterans with disabilities by sharing information, coordinating activities and offering complementary services.

Ticket to Work Employment Networks: VRS, State Services for the Blind and SSA co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks to provide staff training, updates on Ticket to Work procedural changes, and to promote Partnership Plus job retention services after VRS/SSB case closure. (Page 208)

The designated state unit maintains a close working relationship with the local Workforce Development Board's Youth Programs, including the Youth Disability Employment Initiative. Two of the service providers have become Employment Networks so they can continue job retention services after WIOA services have ended. One of the providers is seeking CARF accreditation to become a community rehabilitation provider to better meet the needs of youth with disabilities. (Page 209)

People with disabilities are served in all components of the workforce development system, both as universal customers and in eligibility based programs. Ten percent of the universal customers self-report having a disability. However, when the system became an Employment Network under the SSA Ticket to work Program many people who had indicated they did not have a disability assigned their ticket, suggesting people prefer not to disclose a disability until there is a reason to.

A customer Job Seeker Satisfaction Survey indicated an overall satisfaction with services. The five resources customers found most helpful were developing job related skills (44%), learning job search skills (34%), resources to help in job search (28%), financial help and gas vouchers for job search (26%), and staff helpfulness (17%). Recommendations for improvement included providing more services directly in the Centers (32%), improving the quality of services (16%), increasing financial support (10%), and improving the staffing ratio (8%). It was noted services aren't always consistent statewide. For example, not all Centers have special "zones" for youth and young adults with disabilities. (Page 237)

SSA, VRS and State Services for the Blind co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks. In addition to providing in-service training, the meetings provide an opportunity to learn more about the services offered by each Employment Network to assist consumers make informed choices when selecting a vendor for employment services and/or on-going job retention services.

## Minnesota (MN) WIOA Matrix

The current focus of this group is to expand the use of Ticket to Work funding to provide ongoing job retention supports, and to promote the use of PASS Plans. (Page 256)

**Progress to Date:** All direct service staff have received training on the available funding streams for supported employment. Measuring the impact of this training has been difficult due to the complexity of the funding streams, and the fact that a person may access multiple funding streams to meet specific needs. VRS works closely with the SSA funded Employment Networks to encourage leveraging of Ticket to Work funding to provide on-going supports. In FFY 2015, Employment Networks received over \$250,000 in SSA funding for post-VR job retention services. (Page 260)

SSA, VRS and SSB continue to co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks. One result of this is more Employment Networks are providing Ticket-to-Work funded job retention (Partnership Plus) services following VRS intensive services. There are currently 188 consumers receiving Partnership Plus services. Ticket-to-Work funding is used to supplement Supported Employment funding or to provide continued job retention services beyond the 90 days VRS typically provides. Work incentives basic and advanced training for counselors was provided by work incentives specialists at the Work Incentives Connection.(Page 267)

\* All enclosed information is cited directly from final state plan as of February 23, 2017

Find your local state plans here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/ras/wioa/state-plans/index.html>