



## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

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

- Each year there will be a customer satisfaction survey conducted and an analysis of the survey results.
  - A statewide town hall meeting will be held each of the three years to gather input from consumers and other stakeholders.
  - In FY 2016 VRBS' counselors will be surveyed to gain their input on the needs of consumers.
  - VRBS will continue to be involved with the State Employment Leadership Network to gather information on how VRBS can assist with the Employment First initiative activities.
  - In FY2016 the input that has been obtained from the previous activities will be presented to the VRBS' leadership team to assess and develop priorities for the upcoming strategic plan.
  - After a draft of priorities are developed, input on the priorities and potential strategies for achieving the priorities will be obtained from the SRC and if possible the SILC.
  - In FY 2016 a final draft of the strategic plan will be presented to the SRC for any final recommendations. (Page 196)
- 2) Expansion of mental health providers as CRP's to serve those with severe and persistent mental illness
  - 3) Planning for the needs of consumers requiring higher level of long-term supports was identified through participation with the Supported Employment Leadership Network (the employment first network of Montana. (Page 200)

### Customized Employment

Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) will continue to encumber Title VI, Part B funds on a fee-for-service basis. When supported employment services exhaust Title VI, Part B funds, then Title I funds will be utilized to provide needed supported employment services. At this time and in recent years, this procedure has made it possible to provide all planned supported employment services for individuals receiving VRBS services. If in the future VRBS determines that there are inadequate funds to provide all needed supported employment services for individuals on the VRBS caseload, then the first priority for supported employment services will be on the job supports. The second priority will be services such as transportation and work clothing.

In addition, VRBS prioritizes the use of supported employment models that maximize integration of persons with the most significant disabilities in real work sites, doing meaningful work. VRBS does not support the use of segregated bench work, sheltered, enclave or segregated crew models. VRBS has been aware of and used customized employment techniques for some time, however with the passage of WIOA, VRBS plans to emphasize these techniques to a greater degree. (Page 211)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

**Comment 6:** North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. (NCILS) urge the state to implement policies, procedures, and practices which will benefit all Montanans to receive a fair and competitive wage within an integrated work setting throughout Montana by working with Montana VRBS Section 511. NCLIS supports VRBS in the expanded use of customized employment. NCILS mentions the importance of continuum of services that leads to competitive and integrated employment for all Montanans, including those with disabilities. Response: DPHHS–VRBS appreciates the comments and they will be kept up to date on the implementation of Section–511. (Page 279)

## Braiding/Blending Resources

Braiding funds with other core partners for conferences and trainings focused on supporting career pathways will be the manner in which leadership dollars will align with the work of our core partners. This collaboration across core partner agencies will evolve to meet the needs of WIOA implementation and sustainability. Secondly, the state will support the eligible providers' ability to integrate and sustain career pathways in their instructional practice. Funds will be available to support regional meetings with workforce and one–stop partners to help AE programs identify the components of job–driven training that needs to be incorporated into their curriculum. Regional professional development will make use of leadership dollars to assist programs in learning how to become responsive to local labor market demands. Thirdly, the state will use funds to develop templates and identify resources that support a systemic approach to career pathways; technical assistance will be made available for providers on the use of state developed resources that will inform their pathway implementation. (Page 56-57) and (Page 151)

## Section 188/Section 188 Guide

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

The State of Montana offers services to individuals with disabilities through the Job Service offices across the state. The workforce system is continually developing new and fostering ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive and integrated access to services and expanding the system's capacity to serve customers and employers with disabilities. Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) are funded through Wagner–Peyser and are located at each Job Service office. These coordinators assist individuals with barriers with a variety of employment–related services, and serve as a resource to the workforce community. The DRCs also develop linkages with and collaborate on an ongoing basis with employers to facilitate job placement for persons with barriers to employment. The DRCs assist anyone that encounters additional barriers to securing

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

employment, such as individuals with physical or mental disabilities, learning disabilities, ex-felons, the aging workforce, youth at risk and veterans. Disability Resource Coordinators work with partner agencies routinely to garner mutual support and share information through Community Management Teams, interagency and community organizations. The DRCs identify gaps in service and create working groups to recognize individuals who may benefit from their services. The DRCs, in collaboration with service providers, organize Resource Fairs, provide training opportunities to customers and the employer community, grow relationships with public and private schools to assist with continual learning opportunities. DRCs also meet annually with veterans' representatives to receive new information and collaborate on the best ways to support their targeted populations. Montana is a single-area workforce system. The SWIB is discussing a process for One-Stop center certification, particularly with the new core partners that are included in WIOA. Physical and programmatic accessibility will be among the criteria required for local site certification. (Page 85)

## DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

Veterans that are homeless or at risk of being homeless ?

Veterans separated from service within the last three years and, at any point in the previous 12 months, have been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks?

Veterans that have ever been incarcerated?

Veterans without a high school diploma or equivalent certificate?

Veterans that fall below the poverty line for the area in which they reside?

Veterans between the ages of 18 and 24 years' old?

The spouse of a service member who died of a service-connected disability, has been missing in action for more than 90 days, captured in the line of duty by a hostile force for more than 90 days, forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power for more than 90 days, or who has a total disability that is permanent in nature resulting from a service-connected disability or who died as a result of a service-connected disability?

A family member (parent, spouse, child, step-family member or other that live with but are not a member of the family) that provides personal care services to an eligible veteran

Addressing Accessibility of the One-Stop System

The State of Montana offers services to individuals with disabilities through the Job Service offices across the state. The workforce system is continually developing new and fostering ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive and integrated access to services and expanding the system's capacity to serve customers and employers with disabilities. Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) are funded through Wagner-Peyser and are located at each Job Service office. These coordinators assist individuals with barriers with a variety of employment-related services, and serve as a resource to the workforce community. The DRCs also develop linkages with and collaborate on an ongoing basis with employers to facilitate job placement for persons with barriers to employment. The DRCs assist anyone that encounters additional barriers to securing employment, such as individuals with physical or mental disabilities, learning disabilities, ex-felons, the aging workforce, youth at risk and veterans. Disability Resource

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

Coordinators work with partner agencies routinely to garner mutual support and share information through Community Management Teams, interagency and community organizations. The DRCs identify gaps in service and create working groups to recognize individuals who may benefit from their services. The DRCs, in collaboration with service providers, organize Resource Fairs, provide training opportunities to customers and the employer community, grow relationships with public and private schools to assist with continual learning opportunities. DRCs also meet annually with veterans' representatives to receive new information and collaborate on the best ways to support their targeted populations. Montana is a single-area workforce system. The SWIB is discussing a process for One-Stop center certification, particularly with the new core partners that are included in WIOA. (Page 78-79)

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

VR contracts with employment service providers, and maintains partnerships and agreements with multiple agencies and entities around the state to ensure comprehensive and coordinated services for job seekers with disabilities. VR anticipates that pilot programs and Innovation and Expansion grant opportunities in the upcoming year will further increase its service capacity.

VR's services are provided statewide, with exception to pilot programs, Innovation and Expansion grant activities, and transition services delivered under a Third-Party Cooperative Arrangement (TPCA). VR currently holds TPCA with 20 school districts, and as required, has a waiver of statewideness in place for these arrangements. More details on TPCA and other factors that affect VR's service capacity can be found in the VR services portion of this plan. (Page 45)

- Pilot innovative service models such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS)/peer mentoring to provide more service options to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VR has expanded the use of Discovery and Customized Employment statewide, and is now focusing on increasing capacity to provide these services. VR continues to develop agreements with and partner with other agencies and organizations to provide customers more access to community resources.
- Fully implement a coordinated business relations program across core programs that includes leveraging community partnerships to engage and support Florida's employers and increase access to appropriate employment and educational services.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document to assist customers in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry. Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting. (Page 61)

## Improving Employment Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders

An example of an ongoing partnership is a collaboration with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), DEO, CareerSource Florida, and the LWDBs aimed at improving the employment outcomes for juvenile offenders. On January 1, 2015, DJJ and DEO entered into a statewide

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

Memorandum of Agreement to establish general conditions and joint processes that will enable each agency to collaborate as partners to ensure juvenile offenders under the supervision of DJJ have information about and access to services provided by the state's workforce system. The agreement outlines mutual responsibilities that allow for planning at the state, regional and local levels, promotes the development of linkages between DJJ and the LWDBs, encourages collaboration and establishes guidelines for data sharing protocol development.

Based on this Agreement, DJJ, DEO, and CareerSource Northeast Florida entered into a pilot project with funding from DJJ and CareerSource Florida. The purpose of the pilot project is to improve the employment outcomes for youth offenders under the jurisdiction of DJJ within CareerSource Northeast Florida's local workforce area. (Page 63)

During the next four years, the state will continue to pilot and refine the integrated education and training model for Florida's Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (FICAPS). FICAPS is based on the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model from the state of Washington. The initial pilot year includes eight programs with a cohort of students that are simultaneously enrolled in the GED® Preparation program (GED®-i course) and a career and technical certificate program. Students will learn about career ladders and how to earn stackable credentials. This will provide options for accelerated learning for those adults that are motivated to move ahead as quickly as possible. The goal is to increase the number of students that earn their high school diploma or equivalent and earn entry level industry recognized certification/credential. State wide implementation of the FICAPS will occur in phases as additional programs begin the planning and design activities. Support will be provided in planning and implementation grants as funds are available. (Page 159)

- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies. VR has initiated Discovery Services, a person-centered planning tool as a way to increase the number of individuals with significant and complex disabilities receiving supported employment services. Training opportunities were developed for providers and VR staff on this customized employment strategy.

**Goal 2:** Use Title VI, Part B funds to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

### Plans

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with Title VI, Part B funds, to provide supported employment services as specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment. (Page 225)

**Actual Performance:** The contract was successfully negotiated and was awarded to Market Decisions in June 2014. The strategy was then revised to focus on implementation of new tools and process for assessing customer satisfaction. The new customer satisfaction survey and reports were finalized and implemented, and a pilot was completed in October 2014, with great feedback from customers and vendor. Monthly extract and survey documents have been finalized. Tools to market the new survey in local VR offices were developed by FRC and VR Communications staff.

In addition to data collected through the customer satisfaction survey, VR uses data collected by the Ombudsman Unit to analyze customer success and satisfaction. Below is a comparative

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

summary of customer inquiry and mediation requests fielded by the Ombudsman Unit during FFYs 2014–15 and 2013–14. (Page 236)

3. VR administrators provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR staff, and individual customers.
4. A number of strategies were used to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities listed below.
  - a. Representation on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Employment Task Force. This included helping develop pilot projects on a wide array of employment topics. Administrators were involved as task force members, on advisory committees, and as monitors of projects. The projects complimented and supported VR’s mission of helping individuals get or keep a job.
  - b. Presentations on supported employment at conferences around the state. Audiences included professionals, families, and students regarding employment options.
  - c. Participation as a board member for the Florida Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). (Page 244)

In response to these challenges, VR increased its collaboration with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and other stakeholders to develop pilot projects designed to increase employment opportunities for individuals with most significant disabilities.

VR’s focus on expanding current supported employment service options with Discovery and other related customized services is an important step in reducing the reliance on paid Follow Along/Extended services.

VR was also contending with waiting lists for part of the reporting year which caused cases to be on hold for supported employment services. The wait list caused hardships for some of the providers and they reduced their staff during this time. Providers will now have the opportunity to serve increased numbers of individuals. The Category 1 waiting list was eliminated and referrals and services are progressing. (Page 246)

## Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

VR coordinates with Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. (FILC), and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) throughout the state. Through memoranda of agreement with each of the 16 Centers, VR provides funding, outlines roles and responsibilities, and ensures cooperative planning. The CILs provide services that include work readiness and financial literacy training, which are available to out-of-school youth. VR and the Division of Blind Services (FDBS) are both partners in the agreement with FILC, and both provide funds for council activities outlined in the agreement. (Page 186)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

### Benefits

- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for WIPA services so more VR customers who are ticketholders, youth, and SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work may be served.(Page 62)

VR will continue to collaborate with partners at the state and local levels to maximize employment services for people with disabilities. Florida VR anticipates that all projects within its Strategic Plan will have a positive impact on program performance. Specific activities include the following.

- Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA. (Page 96)
  - Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
  - Collaborate among core programs to efficiently provide services.
  - Membership of state and local workforce boards.
  - Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services. SSA-contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/SSDI (Page 115)

Beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity.

- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other career center partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with intent to include universal design as a separate component of the career center certification process.
- Continue partnerships with community rehabilitation service providers, employers, and career centers.

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

- Continue partnerships with the Florida Rehabilitation Council and the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind to review, analyze, and advise the rehabilitation partners regarding the performance of their responsibilities. (Page 116)

The FRC is pleased to see revisions to the new employee training program and an increased number of course offerings in the learning management system (LMS). The professional development will strengthen the VR workforce further and could ultimately improve customer satisfaction of VR services. The FRC also has been a strong proponent of an advocacy curriculum within the counselor/employee training curriculum. Advocacy is an essential element for the success of this program and the Council renews collective efforts to increase understanding of the benefits of customer self-advocacy and the client development of their own Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). FRC is working with VR on developing this self-advocacy module for system inclusion into LMS. (Page 174)

**Goal 3:** To advocate for employment of persons with disabilities - The FRC continues to educate the public and legislative delegates on the benefits of hiring individuals living with a disability and the services that VR may provide. The Council is working with communities and VR to expand outreach to employers by offering disability employment information and resources for businesses. The Council focus and areas of collaboration are further expressed in Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 provided above.

**Goal 4:** To strengthen the management of FRC internal operation - This goal focuses on improving efficiency and effectiveness of the Council functions and program staff, especially during this period of change and WIOA implementation. FRC members discuss and review program budget and expenditures on a regular basis and are working toward streamlining internal processes to increase the efficiency of costs and efforts. Many actions this past year and for the future are focusing on utilizing electronic communication, access and media to educate and inform members as to the needs of VR and the customers we serve. At this time the FRC has 16 members on the Council with a variety of representative members, such as, a member of DOE, a VR Counselor, the Client Assistance Program (CAP), parents, the Florida Independent Living Council (FILC), vendors and CareerSource Florida to name a few. The Council continues to work with the Governors Appointment Office to meet the federal mandates of Council membership and the strategic partnerships represented as required. Communication and collaboration with VR is at its best, yet remains an important focus for FRC staff and members.

In closing, the FRC is focused on furthering the VR mission to help individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment and enhance their independence. The FRC would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the counselors and field staff of VR. The Council will continue its review of VR service delivery through public forums, supporting strong survey initiatives, promoting effective and efficient methods while incorporating best practices and strategically planning with stakeholders. The recommendations identified in this plan are designed to strengthen the efforts of counselors, field staff, and the collective workforce system to employ all customers in competitive jobs of their choice. (Page 175-176)

VR adopted an early referral/application process for transition students during SFY 2008–2009 to better coordinate with state and local education agencies. Brochures for the VR Transition Youth Program are available to students and families so they can begin gathering information at age 14. The referral process for VR services was updated for SFY 2015 so that students with disabilities

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

may begin to receive VR services at age 15. Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping out of school may be referred at any age. This early referral process allows the counselor to develop a rapport with the transition student and family, explore vocational options and comparable benefits, and begin necessary guidance and counseling. Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities.

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Supported Employment IPE, Individual Support Plan, and/ or Care Coordination Plans are completed or updated as early as possible prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome. VR counselors, with assistance from VR technicians, serve as representatives to work with all public high schools statewide and any private high school requesting assistance. They provide outreach and vocational rehabilitation services orientation to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services. Only the counselor may determine a student's eligibility for VR services, develop an approved IPE, and sponsor the delivery of necessary transition services to help the student with planning, preparing for, and achieving successful employment. (Page 188)

### **Employment First**

As an employment leader, VR strongly encourages partner agencies, organizations, and employers to promote competitive integrated employment in the community as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities who are employed experience enhanced independence and quality of life. They are also contributing to the rich diversity of the workforce so the entire community benefits.

### **Technical Assistance and Consultation**

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to have written agreements with VR, FDDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services. The agreement addresses consultation, coordination, and providing technical assistance to each other, as well as to students and their families/ guardians/surrogates to plan for the transition from high school to postsecondary activities and becoming part of the adult community. (Page 189)

VR recognizes I & E grants as an opportunity that could be beneficial and complementary to WIOA- related initiatives. In the upcoming year, VR will be looking for innovative opportunities that could improve employment services to and successful closures for individuals with "unique abilities," defined in Florida legislation as including individuals who have intellectual disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorders. These opportunities, when identified, will be offered through formal procurement processes.

VR also has collaborative, non-contractual arrangements and agreements with non-profit organizations that provide referrals, other vocational rehabilitation services, and comparable benefits. Through coordinating with Centers for Independent Living, individuals with disabilities receive life skills training, employability skills training, and support such as transportation, clothing, and emergency funds. Relationships with organizations that serve customers with hearing impairments provide opportunities for support groups, sign language classes, and placement assistance. (Page 192 -193)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

The Human Resources page is a one-stop information resource for VR personnel. The Human Resources page consists of six functional groups, which are further divided into subject groups, specific categories, and detailed information pages. Topics include employee rights, benefits and responsibilities, resources such as forms, procedures, and policies, and useful information about VR and state government. Most pages have embedded links to either an internal portion of the VR Intranet, or to an outside website. Each employee can then bookmark any page for easy access. (Page 206-207)

- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of the one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate with and offer training to CareerSource Florida and Employment Networks to provide services.
- Continue area directors' and representatives' participation on the local Workforce Boards.
- Continue to promote VR's presence in CareerSource Florida through co-location of VR units in One- Stop Career Centers, employees being out-stationed, and/or through regular visits by VR employees to One-Stop Career Centers.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program services. SSA contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/ SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity. (Page 213-214)

### **Individuals with Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 2)**

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits one or two functional capacities, in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires two or more primary services;
3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least six months); OR
4. The individual is a recipient of Social Security Disability Benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness. (Page 222)

### **Order of Selection Policies**

Individuals needing Supported Employment services are assessed as having a most significant disability. Additionally, individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits as a result of being determined to be disabled or blind are assessed as having at least a significant disability and are evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria for individuals with most significant disabilities.

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

After an individual is found eligible for VR services, an OOS determination is completed. Additional evaluations or assessments to make this determination may be needed. The VR counselor and individual jointly determine the individual's OOS priority category by evaluating his or her functional limitations, anticipated services needed, and the duration of the services.

This policy does not affect an individual who began to receive services under an approved individualized plan for employment prior to the implementation date of OOS, or those individuals who are in need of post-employment services. (Page 224)

- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share, and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities. (Page 226)
  - 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
  - 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
  - 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
  - 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support, and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA. (Page 233)
  - Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program services. SSA contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/ SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity. (Page 234)

- Contact community organizations and civic groups. Meet with these identified groups on a regular basis to educate and increase their awareness of our agency, services and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Educate employers on hiring persons who are blind and visually impaired in presentations to community organizations and civic groups. Use these opportunities to set up additional events. (Page 318)
- Contact community organizations and civic groups. Meet with these identified groups on a regular basis to educate and increase their awareness of our agency, services and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Educate employers on hiring persons who are blind and visually impaired in presentations to community organizations and civic groups. Use these opportunities to set up additional events.
- At least a quarterly, Employment Placement Specialists will make presentations to community organizations and civic groups. If possible, engage employers who have secured blind and visually impaired employees to participate in the presentations. (Page 320)
- Each district will nominate at least one employer for the joint agency statewide exemplary employer event in October. The Director will award plaques to those nominated for statewide exemplary employer. This occurred in 2013, 2014 and should become an annual process. (Page 330)

FDDBS has specifically identified the following factors as further contributing to the outcome and not meeting Standard 1.2:

- Clients refusing services or not needing further services;
- Inability to locate or contact clients;
- Clients' relocation out of state;
- Staff vacancies;
- Time it took to train new employment placement staff;
- Employer resistance to hiring individuals with disabilities;
- Increase in the number of individuals pursuing post-secondary training instead of employment; and
- Competing between securing employment and maintaining Social Security benefits. (Page 337)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

### School to Work Transition

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows:

1. Local education agencies provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities.
2. VR and FDBS assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome.
3. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities tries to “reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment,” (Chapter 393, Florida Statutes). Additionally, “to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment.” If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in Florida rule.
4. Children’s Medical Services ensures a smooth and successful transition process to adult healthcare services and providers for youth and young adults with special healthcare needs. (Page 190)

#### In-Service Training Grant (please note this grant ended on 9/30/15)

Funds were requested for the in-service training grant based on current and anticipated needs. VR continues to provide a variety of in-house training programs, including counselor training, supervisory training, policy training, new legislation, casework review training, etc.

In carrying out its staff development and training program, VR addresses several topics in its training curricula. The training curricula include (but are not limited to) modules on the following: preliminary assessment, eligibility determination, assessment, IPE development, vocational counseling (within the modules on eligibility determination and individualized plan for employment development), job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural competence, ethics, supported employment, transition from school to work, medical and psychological issues, caseload management, and special programs.

VR places emphasis on the professional development of unit supervisors, area supervisors, and area directors. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings, and general professional development. (Page 207)

In general, the purpose of this agreement is to encourage and facilitate cooperation and collaboration among the local leadership and staff of the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and local offices of VR, FDBS, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Children’s Medical

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

Services, and Mental Health throughout Florida, within the context of applicable federal and state regulations required of each agency, namely:

- LEAs work to provide FAPE for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other post-school activities; and
- VR and FDBS work to assist student transition from secondary school to work through post-secondary educational supports and/or employment supports for a successful employment outcome; and
- APD works to “reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment” (Florida Statute 393). Additionally, F.S. 393 states that “to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide supports and services, within available resources, to assist clients enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment.” If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in rule; and
- Children’s Medical Services works to ensure that youth and young adults with special health care needs are provided with a smooth and successful transition of leaving pediatric or child health care services to receiving services from adult health care providers. Starting at age 12, care coordinators work with parents and children/young adults to prepare them for their future health care needs and services; and
- The Department of Children and Families, Mental Health Unit works to provide a system of care, in partnership with families and the community enabling children and adults with mental health problems or emotional disturbances to successfully live in the community, to be self-sufficient or to attain self-sufficiency at adulthood, and to realize their full potential. Mental health supports and services will enable adults and transitioning students to participate in community activities such as employment and other valued community roles. (Page 268)

FDBS dedicates a staff transition program consultant as the central point of contact for the School to Work Transition Program. The administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. The administrator coordinates and plans for effective

### Transition Services Delivery

The FDBS transition program consultant is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about FDBS transition services at statewide conferences in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency’s role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.(Page 271-272)

FDBS dedicates a staff transition program consultant as the central point of contact for the School to Work Transition Program. The administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. The administrator coordinates and plans for effective transition services delivery.

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

The FDBS transition program consultant is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about FDBS transition services at statewide conferences in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency's role in assisting eligible students with disabilities. (Page 273)

FDBS dedicates a staff transition program consultant as the central point of contact for the School to Work Transition Program. The administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. The administrator coordinates and plans for effective transition services delivery. The FDBS transition program consultant is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about FDBS transition services at statewide conferences in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency's role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.

Additionally, the FDBS transition program consultant provides transition-related technical assistance to field staff. The consultant serves as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee. (Page 305)

VR, FDBS, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health throughout Florida, within the context of applicable federal and state regulations required of each agency, namely:

- LEAs work to provide FAPE for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other post-school activities; and (Page 321)
- VR and FDBS work to assist student transition from secondary school to work through post- secondary educational supports and/or employment supports for a successful employment outcome; and
- APD works to "reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment" (Florida Statute 393). Additionally, F.S. 393 states that "to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide supports and services, within available resources, to assist clients enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment." If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in rule; (Page 322)

Florida VR's most recent CSNA was conducted prior to the addition of this provision. The VR Transition Youth Program conducted an analysis of "VR Engagement of Youth with Disabilities in High School". Data from the VR Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) and the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (BEES) State and Local Education Agency profiles was used to determine the extent to which VR was engaging youth while still in high school. The analysis compared the number of youth with disabilities who had applied for VR services to the total number of youth with disabilities (having an IEP) in a given school district. This provided a percentage of VR engagement for each Florida School District and a way to make comparisons between and among school districts. The information is being used to target intensive technical assistance in poorly engaged areas and facilitate improved communication and collaboration in all school districts. VR will use student engagement data to improve consistency of effort throughout the state and as an additional way to measure gains in performance. (Page 214)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

### Data Collection

- To promote a system that maximizes educational access and allows the opportunity for a high quality education for all Floridians;
- To promote a system of coordinated and consistent transfer of credit and data collection for improved accountability purposes between education delivery systems.

### Blending Academics with Career and Technical Education

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as High School High Tech, Project SEARCH, and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education and provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. (Page 68)

Florida operates WIOA Title I, Title III, and TAA out of the same data management system. It operates SNAP and TANF out of a separate data management system and Unemployment Compensation out of another data management system. These systems are all managed by DEO. However, prior to WIOA, the three systems were already integrated using simple low cost/low effort database and web services technologies. This model has allowed efficient data collection and reporting capabilities while maintaining built-in essential and desired program specific business rules in the respective systems. All data, including Unemployment Compensation data is housed in the same data source for reporting and analysis purposes.

- CONNECT is the data collection management and reporting system for unemployment compensation;
- Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) is the data collection management and reporting system for Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Act, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; and state workforce/employment initiatives;
- One Stop Service Tracking (OSST) is the data collection management and reporting system for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program employment and training activities. (Page 75)

### Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP)

Florida's system infrastructure is comprised of interconnected data collections, management, and reporting systems. The first is responsible for collection management and reporting of unemployment compensation data; the second system serves as the central hub for data collection management and reporting for Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), WIOA, and state workforce/employment initiatives. One of Florida's earliest and most successful innovations in evaluation and performance tracking has been FETPIP, which was established in mid-1980 within FDOE. This program was developed mainly to help evaluate the effectiveness of postsecondary education and training programs, particularly vocational education and similar career preparation programs. The scope of the groups to be tracked rapidly expanded to cover nearly all

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

job training and placement programs including WIOA, Wagner-Peyser (WP), Adult Education, FDBS, Job Corps, Veterans, Welfare Transition (WT)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Apprenticeship, Reemployment Assistance (RA) claimants, and ex-offenders. A total of nearly 600 groups or sub-cohorts are being tracked. FETPIP follow-up data is electronically derived from Reemployment Assistance (RA) quarterly wage records, federal military and civilian personnel records, public assistance, incarceration/parole records, and continued education rosters. Access to this data allows for annual reports with extensive detail and longitudinal capabilities. Each group is typically tracked for at least two years with many tracked over much longer periods, including all graduates (and drop-outs) of high school, certificate programs, (Page 76)

The state will use technology to assist in data collection across the mandatory one-stop career center partner programs. Most of the mandatory program data is already captured and shared extensively between three systems using a strong federated architecture. The intent is to continue this direction by extending it to the new one-stop career center partner programs. Technologies from real-time web services to real time database interfaces will be used. This model will allow workforce assistance experts to see and assess the needs of every job seeker including the unemployed, TANF, SNAP, VR, and Adult Education program participants. New partners will enjoy the same set of streamlined services under one roof in addition to the new partners bringing their product lines to the partnership. All participants will also have access to the labor exchange and labor market information systems. (Page 103)

VR invests 35–40 percent of its statewide staffing resources in transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the rehabilitation information and billing systems for transition students' data collection were implemented on April 22, 2015 to collect transition data elements and track expenditures for transition youth. The Rehabilitation Services Administration will announce any additional data enhancements to meet WIOA requirements once the associated rules and regulations have been finalized. (Page 189)

VR senior leaders continue to participate in quarterly planning meetings following the team approach established in 2012. VR senior leaders review progress made toward strategies, prioritize strategies still in progress, and agree on the strategies that will continue in the updated plan. Senior leaders consider employee feedback from the climate survey, customer, stakeholder and public input, needs assessment findings, customer satisfaction data, general process performance, and data collection and reporting requirements when updating goals, objectives, and strategic projects.

Smooth operation of the strategic planning process is in part due to VR senior leaders' commitment to provide all supports necessary for project teams to be successful. Senior leaders also realize the value of feedback received from VR customers, personnel, stakeholders, and concerned citizens. Arrangements are in place so that anyone can provide feedback on the state plan, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using a dedicated email address on the Florida VR website, [www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml](http://www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml). The email address is [vrplan@vr.fldoe.org](mailto:vrplan@vr.fldoe.org). Concerted effort has also been made to standardize and streamline VR operational processes and procedures, such as staff development, planning, IT governance and development schedules, and business intelligence functions. (Page 241)

FDBS invests 15 percent of its staffing resources to transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

Additional improvements to the AWARE Case Management System for transition students' data collection and tracking were implemented July 2015 to comply with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The enhancements will enable FDBS to conduct differential analysis and tracking to better evaluate agency performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities. (Page 274)

Pending final RSA regulations, FDBS will review and align measures with appropriate data collection and service systems. (Page 313)

FDBS continues to assess its services to individuals with most significant disabilities as well as individuals who are considered as a part of unserved or underserved populations and minorities. In addition, FDBS has identified the following strategies to address this population. Initial implementation of the strategies began during May 2014; a refined data collection instrument was put in place in July 2014. District offices submit monthly data reports that are compiled and analyzed by the state office. (Page 319)

FDBS continues to assess its services to individuals with most significant disabilities as well as individuals who are considered as a part of unserved or underserved populations and minorities. In addition, FDBS has identified the following strategies to address this population. Initial implementation of the strategies began during May 2014; a refined data collection instrument was put in place in July 2014. District offices submit monthly data reports that are compiled and analyzed by the state office. (Page 320)

## Small Business/Entrepreneurship

### **Florida Independent Living Council, Inc.**

VR coordinates with Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. (FILC), and the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. Through memoranda of agreement with each of the 16 Centers, VR provides funding, outlines roles and responsibilities, and ensures cooperative planning. VR and the Division of Blind Services (FDBS) are both partners in the agreement with FILC, and both provide funds for council activities outlined in the agreement.

### **Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind**

VR and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind agree to cooperate in serving students and customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and in establishing transition meetings. Activities are implemented to increase public awareness of programs serving these customers and to improve transition between the school and local counselors.

### **Florida Small Business Development Center Network**

Coordination with this network is carried out at the local level on a case-by-case basis. VR customers who are seeking self-employment can use a Business Planning Team. A representative from the Small Business Development Center Network can serve on such teams to help VR customers assess their potential for self-employment and analyze the various issues that need to be taken into account. (Page 183)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

### Career Pathways

Training activities are provided statewide through face-to-face workshops, webinars, podcasts, and conferences. Needs assessments are conducted to assist in determining state professional development priorities. Current initiatives also determine training topics such as college and career readiness standards, integrated education and training models, essential components of reading instruction, career pathways, mathematics instruction and GED® preparation.

Florida's Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (FICAPS) is Florida's adult education approach to career pathways. Students will simultaneously enroll in an adult education course (GED® Integrated Preparation) and a career and technical certificate program. Adult education programs will collaborate with their LWDB to determine local high-wage high-demand careers when developing career pathways. The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) also promotes implementation of non-credit bridge programs that promote the teaching of literacy skills in a career context. (Page 42)

(GED-i) and a career and technical certificate program. To build capacity for career pathway programs planning and implementation grants were awarded in 2015-2016 and additional grants will be available for 2016-2017. Adult education programs will collaborate with CareerSource Local Workforce Development Boards to determine career pathways suitable for adult learners and the local supply and demand for careers. Resources and training along with the mini-grants will expand the capacity of programs to offer workforce activities. A building capacity goal is to build and deepen partnerships across agencies and organizations within the state to implement Florida's WIOA Unified Plan. The core partners will develop strategies to support staff training and awareness, disseminate best practices, develop and continuously improve the one-stop delivery system, and support the CareerSource Local Workforce Development Boards. The LWDB helps adult education partners and other customers identify high wage, high demand jobs and assist to develop career pathways for the regional areas. Core partners will work together to increase the opportunities and access points for individuals needing service and will work on ways to improve the number of individuals moving from under and unemployment into education and employment opportunities. (Page 43)

### Employment Networks

- **Ticket to Work** - Seventeen Florida LWDBs are designated as Employment Networks by the Social Security Administration enabling their participation in the federally funded Ticket to Work program. Through Ticket to Work, recipients of Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income receive priority assistance such as job search, career planning and skill building through participating CareerSource Florida network career centers to enhance their efforts to find and retain a job and work toward becoming self-sufficient. Participating LWDBs receive funding for workforce services provided to "ticketholders" from the Social Security Administration. In Florida, the Ticket to Work program is administered by VR. VR's Ticket to Work unit is responsible for overseeing the program and systems that track and manage ticket assignment and payments, ensuring timely filing and reimbursement of SSA claims requested by Employment Networks, and providing technical assistance and training to customers and personnel involved in the program. (Page 54)

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

LWDBs continue to expand employment and training services for persons with disabilities. Seventeen of Florida's 24 LWDBs have been approved as Employment Networks (EN) under the Ticket to Work program.

In addition, the state and several LWDBs have accessible mobile CareerSource Florida centers which can provide on-site services for mass layoffs, remote job fairs and other employment and training events, thus providing additional access for individuals with disabilities. (Page 111)

### **Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act**

One of VR's ongoing objectives for the Ticket to Work Program is to increase the number of partnerships with Employment Networks (Employment and Rehabilitation Service Providers). VR hopes to expand the resources available to customers to meet the current and future levels of demand. It is also the goal of VR to ensure that customers have a choice in service providers available within their communities. VR has also implemented an Employment Network Referral and Partnership Agreement that creates more opportunity to develop partnerships with Employment Networks. The agreement features a transitional approach by assisting Social Security Administration customers in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency through core VR services followed by ongoing support services from employment networks. VR will continue to monitor the Agreement's effectiveness in meeting the previously stated goal. (Page 185)

The Statewide Workforce Development System. In addition to the above CSNA recommendations and requirements outlined in WIOA, the following strategies will increase partnerships with the statewide workforce development system to further help jobseekers with disabilities.

- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of the one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate with and offer training to CareerSource Florida and Employment Networks to provide services.
- Continue area directors' and representatives' participation on the local Workforce Boards.
- Continue to promote VR's presence in CareerSource Florida through co-location of VR units in One- Stop Career Centers, employees being out-stationed, and/or through regular visits by VR employees to One-Stop Career Centers.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program services. SSA contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/ SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity. (Page 213-214)
  - Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports.

## Montana (MT) WIOA Matrix

- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports as a resource for ongoing supports.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services. (Page 226)
- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the extended service resources they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports. (Page 228)
- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of the one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate with and offer training to CareerSource Florida and Employment Networks to provide services. (Page 233)

FDBS also strengthened its relationship with Community Rehabilitation Providers and local employment networks in the area of job placement related services. In August 2014, FDBS began utilizing the TAP, an online platform that connects persons with disabilities seeking employment to businesses who are actively hiring. By the end of June 2015, FDBS had a total of 31 clients listed in TAP.

FDBS continued activity with the Employment First Initiative, supported by Executive Order 13-284, which re-affirms a commitment to employment for Floridians with disabilities. The Interagency Cooperative Agreement was signed into effect on July 2014 by nine partner agencies, including FDBS. (Page 338)

\* 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/rsa/wioa/state-plans/index.html>