



Nebraska (NE) WIOA Matrix

Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP)

Nebraska will continue to serve families who are Nebraska residents and:

1. Are composed of either one or two parents; or
2. Specified relatives, conservator, or guardian; and
3. Who are expecting their first child to be born within the next 90 days; or
4. Who care for children under the age of 18; or
5. Up to age 19 if still in secondary school or participating in Employment First after dropping out of school; and
6. Whose family's income and resources meet the current means test. (Page 773)

EMPLOYMENT FIRST PARTICIPATION

Nebraska has adopted the federal definition of work-eligible individuals. All individuals who are defined as a work-eligible individual are required to participate in the Employment First program.

Once a family applies for ADC cash assistance, all work-eligible individuals, unless they otherwise qualify for an exemption from Employment First, are referred to the Employment First program at the time of the intake interview. The work-eligible individual is required to complete an Employment First Self-Sufficiency Contract within five days of the referral and immediately engage in approved work activities.

Dependent children age 15 or younger (including an emancipated minor) and dependent children age 16, 17, or 18 who are full-time students regularly attending an elementary or secondary school or a dependent child age 16 or 17 who is a full-time student and regularly attending college, are not required to participate in the Employment First program. (Page 774)

ORIENTATION/ASSESSMENT/SELF-SUFFICIENCY CONTRACT

The orientation is done as an introduction to the Employment First program and the comprehensive assets assessment. The orientation highlights the responsibilities that the client will be expected to fulfill if s/he becomes eligible for ADC cash assistance. The orientation also provides the participant with detailed information on all Employment First requirements, program expectations, participation options, services, and time limits. An assessment will be completed with each participant. The purpose of the assessment is to gather and organize information about the participant's skills, aptitudes, strengths, interests, goals, prior work experience, family circumstances and employability. The assessment is an ongoing process. Reassessment occurs when a participant's circumstances change, when s/he is not able to continue forward movement in the activities included in his/her Self-Sufficiency Contract, or at any time the case manager and/or the participant determines it is necessary.

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Based on the results of the assessment, an individualized Self-Sufficiency Contract, which incorporates a detailed Service Plan, will be developed. The Contract will stress urgent action toward economic independence. It will outline and define both DHHS' responsibility and the family's responsibility. The Contract will be used as a flexible tool. If the participant is not achieving progress in his/her Contract, it will be evaluated and changed accordingly.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services will be provided to the extent determined necessary to permit the individual to participate in any Employment First approved work activity, including the administrative process of orientation, assessment, self-sufficiency planning, and Self-Sufficiency Contract development, if no other source is available. Case management and necessary supportive services may be provided for the duration of the client's participation in all Employment First approved work activities and, if needed, after the loss of eligibility for ADC cash assistance due to earned income, and if the individual was either cooperating with or participating in Employment First at the time:

7. Extended Employment First supportive can be provided for up to three months for all approved work activities included in his/her Self-Sufficiency Contract; and
8. Transitional Employment First supportive services can be provided for up to six months if the supportive services are determined as necessary and critical for maintaining and/or retaining their employment. Page (775- 776)
9. ADC cash assistance will be reduced by \$50 for each dependent child who fails to attend school if the student's parent has not taken reasonable steps to encourage the child to remain in school.
10. Non-cooperation with Child Support Enforcement will result in a 25 percent reduction in the ADC cash payment and the removal of the sanctioned individual's needs from the medical unit.
11. Refusal to apply for potential income will result in the suspension or closure of the ADC case.
12. Failure of a needy caretaker relative, guardian, or conservator to participate in the Employment First program results in the removal of the individual's needs from the ADC unit. The sanction will last until the failure to participate ceases.
13. Failure of a dependent child age 16, 17, or 18 to attend school without participating in any other Employment First approved work activity results in removal of the child's needs from the ADC unit. The sanction will last until the failure to participate ceases.
14. If the parent(s) fails to participate in the Employment First program, the result is the loss of ADC cash assistance for the entire family. The length of this sanction is: the first sanction will last one month or until the failure to cooperate ceases, whichever is longer. (Page 776)

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As a condition of eligibility for ADC cash assistance, a client determined to be a work-eligible individual and subject to Employment First participation must complete his/her Employment First Self-Sufficiency Contract before the family can be determined eligible to receive ADC cash assistance. If a client does not cooperate in developing and completing an Employment First Self-Sufficiency Contract, the family is ineligible for ADC cash assistance. **BENEFITS** The maximum amount of ADC cash assistance provided will be \$222 for the first person and \$71 for each additional person included in the unit. The amount of the ADC cash payment to the household is determined by completing the following steps: (Page 786)

Employment First participants have the right to independent mediation if the participant is unhappy with a case manager's action or inaction; or when DHHS has determined that the participant has not complied with the terms of the Self-Sufficiency Contract; or the participant contends that DHHS has not fulfilled its terms of the Self-Sufficiency Contract. The request for mediation must be requested within 90 days following the date the notice of adverse action is mailed. Requests for mediation requested within ten days following the date the notice of adverse action is mailed will stay the adverse action until a decision is reached through mediation. If the individual is unhappy with a case manager's action or inaction, the individual has 30 days from the date of the case manager's action or inaction or the date the individual became aware of the case manager's action or inaction to request mediation. (Page 787)

ELDER CARE

Nebraska assists Employment First participants to train for, seek, and maintain employment providing direct care in long-term care facilities, and in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel.

To help communities address the growing need for personnel in the eldercare and healthcare fields, where possible, the Employment First program will partner with community organizations, schools and businesses in developing and funding community responsive customized training for certified nursing assistants (CNA) and certified medication aides (CMA). Nebraska promotes and funds CNA and CMA training, for which state and federal financial aid is not available. Job skills training and vocational training in eldercare and healthcare occupations are approved work activities under the Employment First program. (788)

The following individuals are exempt from participating in Employment First and are exempt from the state and federal time limit for the length of time they qualify for the exemption:

1. A person who:
 - a. Has an illness or injury serious enough to temporarily prevent entry into employment or participating in another Employment First component activity for up to three months;
 - b. Is incapacitated with a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which, by itself or in conjunction with age, prevents the individual from engaging in employment or participating in another Employment First component activity and which is expected to exist for a continuous period of at least three months.

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2. A person age 65 or older.
 3. A parent who is needed in the home on a continuous basis to provide care for a disabled family member living in the home who does not attend school on a full-time basis and no other appropriate member of the household is available to provide the needed care.
 4. A victim of domestic violence and where participation in Employment First approved work activities would make it more difficult for the individual to escape violence, or unfairly penalize the individual, or would put the individual at risk of further domestic violence.
 5. A single custodial parent who is unable to participate because s/he cannot obtain child care for his/her child age five or younger for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. Unavailability of appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the client's home or work site;
 - b. Unavailability or unsuitability of informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements; or
 - c. Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements. (Page 789)
- A. **Extended supportive services:** Supportive services determined necessary to participate in all approved Employment First activities included in a participant's Self-Sufficiency Contract may be provided for up to three months, if needed, after the loss of eligibility for ADC cash assistance due to earned income.
- B. **Transitional supportive services:** Supportive services determined necessary and critical for job retention may be provided for up to six months, if needed, after the loss of eligibility for ADC cash assistance due to earned income.
- C. **Administrative Expenses:** Nebraska expends funds to administer Nebraska's assistance programs. These administrative costs support staff and necessary overhead. These qualifying state expenditures are developed through our Cost Allocation Plan.
- D. **Information Systems Expenses:** Nebraska expends funds to provide information systems to provide needed information to staff regarding eligibility, client activities, cash payments and services for families receiving assistance. These qualifying state expenditures are developed through our Cost Allocation Plan. (Page 791-792)

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Customized Employment

In addition to the required career and training activities, local areas may provide:

1. Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers;
2. Customized employment-related services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations on a fee-for-service basis;
3. Implementation of a pay-for-performance contract strategy for training services, for which the local board may reserve and use not more than 10 percent of the total adult or dislocated worker funds allocated to the local area;
4. Customer support to enable individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities) and veterans, to navigate among multiple services and activities for such populations;
5. Technical assistance for One-Stop operators, One-Stop partners, and eligible providers of training services, regarding the provision of services to individuals with disabilities in local areas, including the development and training of staff, the provision of outreach, intake, assessments, and service delivery, the coordination of services across providers and programs, and the development of performance accountability measures; (Page 240)
6. Employment and training activities provided in coordination with—
 - a. Child support enforcement activities of the State and local agencies carrying out part D of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 651 et seq.); (Page 224)

Impending changes in Section 511 of WIOA and Nebraska's experience in working with individuals with significant disabilities, lead to the conclusion that an emphasis on Customized Employment can increase the opportunities for successful employment and expanded partnerships with employers. In order for Nebraska VR to be successful in the implementation of Customized Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities, Nebraska is receiving intensive technical assistance and training from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) in the following areas:

1. Strategies to increase employer awareness and acceptance of a Customized Employment approach and
2. Training to VR staff at all levels to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and buy-in to the Customized Employment approach and to work with businesses to negotiate customized employment opportunities. (Page 662)

Increase our capacity to provided customized employment services and options to consumers and employers. Nebraska VR is one of the states selected to receive technical assistance under the JD-VR TAC. The impending changes in Section 511 of WIOA, and the agency's experience in working with individuals with significant disabilities, point to an

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increased emphasis on Customized Employment. In order for Nebraska VR to be successful in the implementation of Customized Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities, there are two areas of need for intensive technical assistance and training to be provided:

1. Strategies to increase employer awareness and acceptance of a Customized Employment approach; and
2. Training to VR staff at all levels to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and buy-in to the Customized Employment approach and to work with businesses to negotiate customized employment opportunities. The JD-VR TAC will work with Nebraska VR to increase our capacity to provide customized employment services through the provision of training and technical assistance. The expected outcomes are:
 - An increase in the number and type of businesses adopting a customized employment approach and establishing a CE job for an individual with a significant disability.
 - An increase in the number of individuals with a significant disability, especially individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability, participating in competitive integrated employment.
 - An increase in the quality of employment (as determined by the salary, benefits, number of hours worked, etc.). (Page (687-688))
 - Develop strategies in coordination with the appropriate core partners and participating Combined State Plan program partners once benchmarks are established.
 - Implement the technical assistance and training on customized employment with VR staff and providers. Technical assistance will be provided by the Job-Driven VR Technical Assistance Center. (Page 695)
2. Development and placement in competitive integrated employment includes customized employment services for the maximum number of hours possible consistent with the person's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities.
3. Intensive on-the-job skills training and other training provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers, and other qualified persons is based on a systematic analysis of the work to be performed, and a systematic analysis of the employer's performance expectations and requirements. It is conducted in accordance with a written plan identifying the methods of teaching, instruction, and behavior management necessary to enable the individual to acquire skills and master the work to be performed, to regulate behavior in accordance with the employer's requirements and expectations, and achieve stable job performance. The training provides for a systematic reduction of intensive teaching, instruction, and behavior management methods to the lowest intervention level necessary to maintain stable job performance. (Page 704)

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- g. Benefits planning to ensure an understanding of work incentives and earnings reporting requirements.
 - h. Customized employment services to enhance the likelihood of competitive, integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
5. Follow-up services, including regular contact with the employer, the individual with a most significant disability, the individual's parents, guardian or other representative, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement.
6. On-going monitoring services from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services from one or more extended services providers. These services include, at a minimum, the assessment of employment stability and, based on that assessment, the coordination or provision of specific services needed to maintain employment stability.
2. Job development including customized employment and placement services are provided to the extent necessary to place the individual into competitive integrated employment consistent with client's informed choice.
3. Intensive on-the-job and other training services are provided to the person to the extent necessary to achieve stable job performance, or to determine on the basis of clear evidence this cannot be achieved. Services are provided for a maximum of 24 cumulative months, or for youth with a disability (16-24) utilizing Title VI funds up to 48 cumulative months unless a longer period is provided in the IPE of the person.
4. Other services are made available to the extent necessary to support the individual achieving a successful competitive integrated outcome. (Page 705)

Braiding/Blending Resources

No specific disability related information found.

Section 188/Section 188 Guide

Nebraska maintains an Accessibility policy that stresses physical and programmatic accessibility, including the use of accessible technology to increase individuals with disabilities' access to high quality workforce services. Title I of WIOA assigns responsibilities at the local, State and Federal levels to ensure the creation and maintenance of an American Job Center (AJC) system that enhances the range and quality of workforce development services that are accessible to individuals seeking assistance. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, political affiliation or belief, participant status, and against certain non-citizens. Although gender identity is not an explicitly protected basis under the applicable federal laws, discrimination based upon gender identity, gender expression, and sex stereotyping has been

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interpreted to be a form of prohibited sex discrimination, including under laws that apply to federally financially assisted employment, training, and education programs and activities. (Page 112)

A recipient is obligated to provide physical and programmatic accessibility and reasonable accommodation/modification in regard to the WIOA program, as required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and Section 188 of WIOA. (Page 126)

6. Conduct regular oversight and monitoring. To ensure that individuals are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, conduct regular oversight of programs and services. Local boards must assess, on an annual basis, the physical and programmatic accessibility of all AJCs in the local area, in accordance with Sec. 188 of WIOA, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.[14] (Page 130)

[12] While the Reference Guide provides citations to the current regulations issued pursuant to Section 188 of WIA, USDOL anticipates that the promising practices contained in the Reference Guide will remain relevant and useful for the One-Stop system under the forthcoming WIOA regulations. (Page 131)

WIOA section 188 provides that no individual may be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, subjected to discrimination under, or denied employment in the administration of or in connection with, any such program or activity because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation or belief. [4]

Participation in programs and activities must also be available to citizens of the United States, lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, and parolees, and other immigrants authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States. Individuals with employment authorization may access any WIOA services for which they otherwise would qualify. [5] (Page 174)

- A standing committee to provide information and assist with operational and other issues relating to the One-Stop delivery system, which may include as members representatives of the One-Stop partners.
- A standing committee to provide information and to assist with planning, operational, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth, which shall include community-based organizations with a demonstrated record of success in serving eligible youth.
- A standing committee to provide information and to assist with operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, including issues relating to compliance with Sec. 188 of WIOA [Discrimination], if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding providing programmatic and physical access to the services, programs, and activities of the One-Stop delivery system, as well as appropriate training for staff on providing supports for or accommodations to, and finding employment opportunities for, individuals with disabilities.[31] (Page 190)

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Participation in programs and activities must also be available to citizens and nationals of the United States, lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, and parolees, and other immigrants authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States. Individuals with employment authorization may access any WIOA services for which they otherwise would qualify. [35] (Page 228)

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DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

No specific disability related information found.

Other State Programs/Pilots that Support Competitive Integrated Employment

An example of aligning and leveraging combined plan partners and other one-stop partner programs is the YRTC Community Partner pilot which centers around providing highly coordinated services to youth who have been ordered by the Nebraska Juvenile Courts to reside in one of the State's two youth rehabilitation and treatment centers (YRTC). The community partners in this pilot include: Wagner-Peyser, WIOA, VR, Probation, Health and Human Services, and the community colleges. The partners have designed specific career pathway services that begin while the youth is still a resident of the YRTC and continue upon release. The community partner's pilot approach is holistic in nature and provides consistent continuity of services that are supported. (Page 597)

Process included a pilot program to track the flow of payments, training for both VR staff and for providers. The Division of Behavioral Health instituted a "Supported Employment Payment Protocol Manual — Milestones and Payment for Services". VR changed its Program Manual to reflect all of the changes. The new payment system was implemented starting October 1, 2014.

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Regular communication is the key to keeping the model moving forward. VR case reviews and supported employment provider program reviews were conducted again during the summer of 2015. A report was written and overall recommendations were made for program improvement. DBH conducts fiscal audits and provider reviews.

VR teams have a designated liaison meeting at least monthly with the supported employment providers. The VR Program Manager and VR Office Directors meet quarterly with the supported employment providers. (Page 665)

MyVR and Social Media: Nebraska VR will continue to promote the use of MyVR, a consumer side social media-type application that allows for enhanced communication and engagement with staff and client access to selected case management information. MyVR was developed and piloted in partnership with ICI-UMass' Learning Collaborative under the auspices of the NIDILRR funded RTAC on VR Program Management. Nebraska VR will maintain its presence in other social media arenas such as LinkedIn, FaceBook, and Twitter.

Increase the participation of Native Americans in VR services. The State Rehabilitation Council suggested that the agency explore opportunities to collaborate with any existing American Indian VR programs in Nebraska to increase the number of Native Americans with disabilities being served. The one existing program in Nebraska is no longer funded. The agency will identify possible partnerships to encourage other eligible tribes/organizations to apply for an AIVR grant as available. (Page 686)

At present there is no client of NCBVI who is identified as eligible for Supported Employment as a result of autism or traumatic brain injury, in combination with visual impairment. Once the connections amongst the agencies are better established, it is expected that we (NCBVI and other entities) will be prepared to provide the services, since groundwork in the other related areas will have been laid.

There is a need to promote more public education and to form new relationships. The main history in the SE arena has been with the Division of Developmental Health. NCBVI Deputy Directors and Supervisors are developing plans to expand that work. (Page 757)

The program is also participating in the development of the Nebraska's Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC). This partnership will be able to provide information to address a variety of human services as well as a referral to local agencies which provide assistance to our targeted population. The ADRC website provides linkages to a wide variety of community resources for the SCSEP participants. Coordination with ADRC will be enhanced after the selection of pilot organization(s) in the state in early 2016. (Page 841)

Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies;

- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services;

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- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have an academic and occupational education component;
- Occupational skill training which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors/occupations;
- Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation activities;
- Leadership development opportunities;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Follow-up services for a minimum duration of 12 months after completion of participation, and may be provided beyond 12 months at the Local Board's discretion;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Labor market and employment information for in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training. (Page 597)

Benefits

Further, statistics show that the significant population of persons with disabilities in Nebraska is in need of workforce services in order to bridge the gap between themselves and their peers across the state.

- There are 205,354 persons within Nebraska with a disability (*Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2014*), of which 88,700 are between the ages of 21 and 64 (*2012 Disability Status Report, disabilitystatistics.org*).
- Of those Nebraskans ages 18-64 with a disability, only 45.5% are employed, a rate that is significantly less than the 82.6% employment rate for Nebraskans, ages 18-64, without a disability (*Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2014*).
- There are 16,900 persons with disabilities in Nebraska receive benefits (*2012 Disability Status Report, disabilitystatistics.org*).
- In 2012 alone, Nebraska's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$594,300,000 (*Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2014*). (Page 31)

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When providing aid, benefits, or services under a WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity, a recipient must not directly or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, on the ground of disability:

1. Deny a qualified individual with a disability the opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefits, services, or training;
2. Afford a qualified individual with a disability an opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefits, services, or training that is not equal to that afforded others;
3. Provide a qualified individual with a disability with an aid, benefit, service or training that is not as effective in affording equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others;
4. Provide different, segregated, or separate aid, benefits, services, or training to individuals with disabilities, or to any class of individuals with disabilities, unless such action is necessary to provide qualified individuals with disabilities with aid, benefits, services or training that are as effective as those provided to others;
5. Deny a qualified individual with a disability the opportunity to participate as a member of planning or advisory boards; or
6. Otherwise limit a qualified individual with a disability in enjoyment of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity enjoyed by others receiving any aid, benefit, service or training.

There are currently two Project SEARCH Business Advisory Councils (BAC) in Nebraska. The goal of the BAC is to broaden the program across a variety of industries, provide individuals with disabilities access to the resources they need to be successfully employed in a wide-range of fields and serve as a platform to further educate business professionals about the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities. The measurable goal is 100% employment of Project SEARCH intern participants. Between the two Nebraska BACs there are more than thirty businesses involved. Nebraska VR will consider increasing the number of Project SEARCH sites available in the state and will also consider the expansion of BACs. (Page 663)

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VR Service Specialist and VR Senior Service Specialist positions

VR Service Specialists provide direct support to persons with disabilities seeking employment. Their responsibilities include:

Conducting orientation to Social Security benefits and benefits analysis, providing personal

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management training, social skills training, job placement assistance, job seeking skills training and other instruction of persons with disabilities using standardized curricula and instructional methods, and providing information about the purpose, nature, and scope of vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, service providers, and the general public. (Page 672)

Specific types of team services provided directly by our staff include: community-based assessment, career counseling, vocational evaluation, disability awareness counseling, personal adjustment counseling, independent living skill training, personal management training, social skills training, job placement assistance, and job retention assistance. Also included are: Social Security benefits orientation, job seeking skills training and other instruction of persons with disabilities, monitoring persons with disabilities engaged in agreed on rehabilitation plans, providing information, arranging, coordinating, and scheduling team activities, arranging, coordinating, scheduling, and providing transportation, developing, preparing, and maintaining individual service records, and arranging financial assistance to procure agreed on goods and services. Motivational interviewing training has been provided to current staff. New staff will receive the same training. This training is expected to enhance the staff's delivery of team services. (Page 676)

Most private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers in Nebraska do not specifically serve persons who are blind or visually impaired. Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) does work cooperatively with such entities when specific client needs and interests dictate. In such cases, agreements are developed for the provision of relevant services. Outlook Nebraska, Inc. (ONI) of Omaha is a private nonprofit providing employment and training that allow blind and visually impaired persons to achieve personal and career goals. NCBVI works cooperatively with ONI, Goodwill, and other service providers to serve mutual clients or consumers. In addition to services specific to individuals, NCBVI collaborates on various projects. NCBVI worked with ONI in providing cane travel instruction to all their employees. NCBVI worked with each of three work shifts to demonstrate appropriate cane technique and staff walked all through their work area and break area utilizing canes (Two Point Touch, Shore lining, Pencil Grip, Sighted Guide). Working with ONI management the goal is to make this an annual training event. Training was provided for ONI blind employees on Social Security Benefits, the benefits of earning SGA and understanding Social Security. Also being explored is a workshop on Tasks of Daily Living. A collaborative project in 2013 was to develop public information materials about 'vision resources' in our area. The Coalition of Vision Resources: The partners are NCBVI, ONI, Radio Talking Book of Nebraska (RTBN), Nebraska Library Commission and Talking Book and Braille Services, Lions Clubs, Nebraska Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Nebraska. The NCBVI Omaha District Supervisor shared the work product at the state conventions of the Nebraska Academy of Eye Surgeons, Ophthalmologists, and Optometrists in 2013 and 2014. NCBVI also partners with the Nebraska Foundation for Visually Impaired Children in the provision of assistive technology for blind and visually impaired children under 14 years of age on an ongoing basis. (Page 724)

Information is also provided about the resources available – some directly from NCBVI, such as paying for technology, or from external sources, such as tax supports or benefits to the employer as a result of hiring a person with a disability.

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2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

Transition services, including pre–employment transition services (PETS) for students and youth with disabilities are key to life–long successful employment of persons with disabilities. NCBVI has a strong emphasis on building the skills and abilities of blind and visually impaired youth, so that they will be successful. The WAGES program is an example already in place, others will likely be developed pursuant to PETS requirements in WIOA. Work And Gain Experience in the Summer (WAGES) first focuses on identifying employers who will hire young clients for a nearly full–time job during the summer. Employers involved are encouraged to consider the youth as any employee, with high expectations for performance. NCBVI provides salaries to the clients and consultation and technology to the employers. This and other such programs are effective in the career success of the young clients; they are also instrumental in enabling employers to have direct experience with the benefits of hiring people who are blind. This promotes more opportunities for VR clients of all ages to achieve full–time integrated employment. (Page 726)

Including the Rehabilitation Act, Randolph–Sheppard, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and others,

2. Methods to help clients of all ages achieve successful employment in high–quality positions with benefits and opportunities for advancement,
3. Using data to measure the success of concentrated efforts for achieving goals of high quality employment outcomes,
4. Providing effective services to transition–aged persons who are blind or visually impaired, including approaches to outreach and service delivery;
5. Ways to work effectively with the increasing number of older individuals who are losing vision but still want or need to be a part of the workforce,
6. Serving persons with multiple disabilities, especially deaf–blindness,
7. Assistive technology, including non–visual and low vision options,
8. Maximizing effectiveness in the group training or counseling setting,
9. Social Security information, including benefits counseling and PASS plan development,
10. Supported employment,
11. Workplace policies,

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12. Positive philosophical understandings of blindness,
13. Diversity awareness and sensitivity training, especially to working with people from poverty, and
14. Additional relevant issues, e.g. transportation, crisis management, etc.

The long-range plan for ongoing development of staff is based upon needs identified by our annual processes for comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The plan is updated and kept current with ideas or issues identified from ongoing client satisfaction surveys, employee requests for additional training on specific topics, and internal data collection from the NCBVI data management system. (Page 733)

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is the Designated State Agency responsible under State law for operating the vocational rehabilitation program for the blind in Nebraska. A governing board, the majority of whom are persons who are blind or visually impaired, appointed by the Governor of the State of Nebraska serves to assure the agency is consumer-controlled. NCBVI undertakes to review and analyze the effectiveness of services and consumer satisfaction with services provided by the Commission, vocational rehabilitation services provided by other state, public and private entities, and employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services from NCBVI, to assure high quality, career track employment outcomes, with health and other employment benefits, wages comparable to state wages for non-disabled persons, and equity for persons of minority status. Formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) During FFY 2013, NCBVI established a contract with the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Mississippi State University Research Unit for a formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to cover the period of 2011 through 2013. The assessment included surveys of blind clients closed either in status 26 or 28, members of NCBVI staff, and employers who have had experience with NCBVI staff and clients. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with other key informants. In addition, existing data from various sources was analyzed, such as the RSA-(Page 735)

Special programs such as Project Independence for children between the ages of five and fourteen stress the importance of self-confidence and independence using the alternative skills of blindness. Programs for blind and visually impaired teens such as WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) and Winnerfest provide valuable work experiences and opportunities for developing interpersonal skills needed for success in later life. Other programs such as technology fairs and the College Workshop also help blind and visually impaired students make the transition to life after high school. In the coming year, NCBVI will increase efforts promoting more job opportunities for blind and visually impaired youth in their home communities throughout the school year. In September 2015, NCBVI hired a Transition Services Specialist to strengthen the relationship between NCBVI and schools statewide on behalf of blind and visually impaired students. Fifteen percent (15%) of funds allocated to NCBVI for vocational rehabilitation services are dedicated to providing pre-employment transition services to blind and visually impaired youth between the ages of 14 and up to but not including 22; 50 percent (50%) of funds for supported employment services are committed to providing pre-employment transition services to blind and visually impaired youth in the same age group. Increasing the number of blind and visually impaired youth in transition achieving their individual employment goals is a major objective for NCBVI in FY 2016. Transition-aged clients are encouraged to elevate their expectations for personal achievement. (Page 737)

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School to Work Transition

Nebraska VR supports 17 Project SEARCH sites across the state. Consistent with the national model, Project SEARCH is a partnership between Nebraska VR, a business, area school systems, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. The one year school-to-work program is business led and takes place entirely in the workplace. The experience includes a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. While completing the rotations, the students have the opportunity to gain transferable skills, practice self-advocacy and demonstrate work readiness. Nebraska's Project SEARCH programs are hosted in a variety of businesses including hotels, hospitals, retail and distribution. (Page 658)

There are currently 17 Project SEARCH sites in Nebraska. Consistent with the national model, Project SEARCH is a partnership between Nebraska VR, a business, area school systems, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. The one year school-to-work program is business led and takes place entirely in the workplace. The experience includes a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. While completing the rotations, the students have the opportunity to gain transferable skills, practice self-advocacy, and demonstrate work readiness. Nebraska's Project SEARCH programs are hosted in a variety of businesses including hotels, hospitals, retail and distribution. (Page 663)

Nebraska Department of Education Special Education Data by Impairment shows a three-year increase in the number of students identified as experiencing Autism. This identification is an educational diagnosis rather than a medically verified diagnosis. Regardless, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders experience difficulty in employment due to their social and communication skills and their repetitive and restricted behaviors and interests.

Nebraska VR has a significant presence in the high schools across the state assessing and counseling, attending IEPs and working with the schools and other community partners. This provides a foundation for developing and offering a wide range of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

On average, 35.4% of clients served by Nebraska VR are age 21 or younger when applying for VR services. (Page 681)

Maintain and increase the number of Project Search sites in Nebraska. Project SEARCH is a partnership between Nebraska VR, a business, area school systems, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. This one year school-to-work program is business led and takes place entirely in the workplace. The experience includes a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The goal upon program completion and graduation is to utilize skills acquired during the internship for gainful employment and greater opportunity for economic self-sufficiency. Nebraska has established 17 Project Search sites and will seek to expand the number of sites during the next year. (Page 688)

The transition youth conferences and the Youth Leadership Council are innovation and expansion activities that focus on students who are potentially eligible or are under an IEP or

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Section 504 Plan. The Youth Leadership Council members reach out to other students who can benefit from VR services and serve as role models for transitioning from school to work. Transition youth conferences provide opportunities for career exploration and development of work soft skills including independent living skills. The number of youth conferences and the number of youth attending continue to increase due to additional support from VR. (Page 696)

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

Consistent with requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act, NCBVI coordinates with entities within the WIOA system, including teachers of the visually impaired and education officials, to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the vocational rehabilitation service system. We have developed a number of strategies to address the seamless transition from school to work for blind students. The most formal is a Cooperative Agreement, signed and updated periodically. (Page 722)

In September 2015, NCBVI hired a Transition Services Specialist to strengthen the relationship between NCBVI and schools statewide on behalf of blind and visually impaired students. Fifteen percent (15%) of funds allocated to NCBVI for vocational rehabilitation services are dedicated to providing pre-employment transition services to blind and visually impaired youth between the ages of 14 and up to but not including 22; 50 percent (50%) of funds for supported employment services are committed to providing pre-employment transition services to blind and visually impaired youth in the same age group. Increasing the number of blind and visually impaired youth in transition achieving their individual employment goals is a major objective for NCBVI in FY 2016. Transition-aged clients are encouraged to elevate their expectations for personal achievement. This can translate to higher education, often delaying their ultimate employment. It may take more years to reach that goal, but when they do, it will be in a career that will pay well, have benefits, and the chance for promotions. We are in the process of examining all 28 closures, including those for Transition clients. We will determine if there is any difference between those who choose to continue their education and those who do not. We also will explore any commonalities among cases closed unsuccessfully. There may be strategies which can be used to improve the employment outcomes and the resulting rehab rate. (Page 751)

NCBVI has developed workshops for clients that give a jump-start toward competitive employment. They also serve to educate business people about the features and benefits involved with hiring blind job candidates, the capabilities of blind individuals, and technology related to blind persons in the workplace. These events have been highly effective in the short term and are expected to garner additional benefits over time. (Page 752)

In addition to these partnerships, some respondents noted the benefits of strengthening partnerships with community organizations, non-employment related agencies (such as housing, transportation, and Medicaid), advocacy groups, the Nebraska Partner Council, and low vision clinics. Most respondents suggested that partnering with other organizations is a viable way to better serve hard to reach consumers and to improve services with limited funding. Some respondents suggested that partnering with agencies in rural areas, or hiring paraprofessionals, would improve outreach and services to those living in those communities. Collaboration with other

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agencies was also suggested as one way to improve services to non-English speaking consumers by learning how cultural and language barriers are being addressed by other community agencies. While most respondents were in favor of improving and developing partnerships, one individual cautioned that “sometimes too many agencies working together can create delays and miscommunication.” (Page 755)

- b. Plan and/or participate in career fairs/hiring events within a 90 mile radius of Lincoln
- Coordination between the LVER and the partner programs will take place to coordinate each staffs’ roles in the event
 - LVER will engage employers in conversation about the benefits of hiring veterans.
 - LVER will partner with Wagner-Peyser to promote services offered to job seekers
 - Interested job seekers will be followed up within 2 business days of the event to review the veteran’s job skills, abilities, goals, and any limitations
 - Labor market information and vocational guidance will be reviewed with the job seeker (Page 808)

Data Collection

The audit [which includes funds awarded by the Nebraska Department of Labor] shall be completed and the data collection form and reporting package as identified in OMB Circular A-133 or the Uniform Guidance, shall be submitted within the earlier of 30 days after receipt of the auditor’s report(s), or nine months after the end of the audit period (unless a longer period is agreed to in advance by the cognizant or oversight agency for grants under A-133, or unless a different period is specified in a program specific audit guide for grants under the Uniform Guidance). If the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal holiday, the reporting package for a grant under the Uniform Guidance is due the next business day. (Page 151)

Technical assistance may include providing assistance with data collections, meeting data entry requirements, and identifying level of performance (see WIOA Section 134(a)(3)(A)(xiv)). (Page 431)

The State Trade Unit and Trade Readjustment Allowance benefit staff shall work together to meet data collection, storage, and reporting requirements. To reinforce the pursuit of the program performance goals and ensure clear and uniform procedures are followed, state performance management training or meetings shall be held and include participation of State Trade Coordinator and TRA benefit staff. The State Trade Unit shall capture and report information related to a participant’s ongoing participation in training or waiver status to the TRA benefit payment staff. (Page 470)

If the TAA program funding sources for provision of employment and case management services to workers in the TAA program are insufficient to meet the requirement that these services be offered to all adversely affected workers and adversely affected incumbent workers, OE&T must

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make arrangements to assure that funding under the WIOA or another program is available to provide those services. In the event local WIOA funds are exhausted, OE&T will apply for a National Emergency Grant to replenish funds. Multiple enrollment resources may include Wagner-Peyser activities, faith-based and community-based programs, vocational rehabilitation services, and veterans' programs.

The Trade Unit and Trade Readjustment Allowance benefit staff shall work together to meet data collection, storage, and reporting requirements. To reinforce pursuit of the program performance goals and ensure clear and uniform procedures are followed, state performance management training or meetings shall be held and include participation of State Trade Coordinator and TRA benefit staff. The State Trade Unit shall capture and report information related to a participant's ongoing participation in training or waiver status to the TRA benefit payment staff. (Page 484)

1. Laws and regulations, including the Rehabilitation Act, Randolph–Sheppard, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and others,
2. Methods to help clients of all ages achieve successful employment in high–quality positions with benefits and opportunities for advancement,
3. Using data to measure the success of concentrated efforts for achieving goals of high quality employment outcomes,
4. Providing effective services to transition–aged persons who are blind or visually impaired, including approaches to outreach and service delivery;
5. Ways to work effectively with the increasing number of older individuals who are losing vision but still want or need to be a part of the workforce,
6. Serving persons with multiple disabilities, especially deaf–blindness,
7. Assistive technology, including non–visual and low vision options,
8. Maximizing effectiveness in the group training or counseling setting,
9. Social Security information, including benefits counseling and PASS plan development,
10. Supported employment,
11. Workplace policies,
12. Positive philosophical understandings of blindness,
13. Diversity awareness and sensitivity training, especially to working with people from poverty, and
14. Additional relevant issues, e.g. transportation, crisis management, etc.

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The long-range plan for ongoing development of staff is based upon needs identified by our annual processes for comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The plan is updated and kept current with ideas or issues identified from ongoing client satisfaction surveys, employee requests for additional training on specific topics, and internal data collection from the NCBVI data management system. (Page 773)

As with any data management system, facets needing to be fine-tuned have become evident. The programming and training costs have been funded with a combination of Title I Innovation and Expansion and Social Security Reimbursement funds. Enhancement of the system and provision of the service are specific areas for which resources are needed. New, major additional requirements from RSA for 911 data collection have been implemented, relating to medical coding and other reporting elements. The new regulations, pending further regulations related to WIOA, and an effort to link system with the State of Nebraska fiscal system has led to the decision to purchase a proprietary data system. NCBVI is in the process of a Request for Proposals for competitive bid. This should generate proposals from major software entities for consideration. Plan for starting with a new system is projected at October 1, 2017. Work with the data management system will address all goals. Data management will enable NCBVI to analyze the effectiveness of all parts of the system. These can then be used the data based results to add value to overall efforts of the agency, achieve established goals, and to identify future needs and challenges. (Page 749)

Small Business/Entrepreneurship

The United States Rural Development Agency (RDA) administers programs related to self-employment, business opportunities, housing, and other community economic development activities. NCBVI collaborates by providing information to counseling staff about the RDA programs which might benefit their clients. NCBVI VR Counselors also provide information to RDA representatives about efforts to assist blind and visually impaired Nebraskans to access funds available for developing self-employment and business opportunities.

NCBVI works to assure that all the programs of the RDA in Nebraska are made available to clients. We also are available to provide training about NCBVI services, and about blindness, to RDA personnel. With this training they are able to provide reciprocal referrals to persons participating in their programs who might be eligible for services from NCBVI. NCBVI offices are located in six locations; NCBVI staff work in all communities across the State of Nebraska. Agency staff members go to where the referrals and clients live, to provide the rehabilitation services specific to each individual. In each area and statewide, they work with local, state, and regional resources available. These include, but are not limited to small business, women's and minority business initiatives, community commercial, recreational and educational programs, religious entities (churches, synagogues, mosques), and private or public organizations are available and relevant to helping blind Nebraskans achieve their employment goals. (Page 720)

In this report, the Research Division reviews and updates, where possible, Battelle's assessment of Nebraska's preparedness for an innovation-driven economy. Battelle identified a broad set of measures to determine a state's readiness to develop a successful, innovation-based economy that can remain competitive. These measures involve talent, as measured by academic performance in science and engineering; entrepreneurial activity, measured by business establishment, employment and revenue growth; the availability of risk capital, measured by venture capital and Small Business Innovation Grant awards; research and development, measured by R&D expenditures in academic

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and industry settings; and intellectual property generation and technology transfer, measured by the number of patents granted and university technology transfers. Where possible, the Research Division reviewed and updated Battelle's innovation-related measures, and when this was not possible, alternative measures were identified. (Page 908)

Battelle's third measure of Nebraska's preparedness to develop an innovation-driven economy is based on risk capital available for financing emerging businesses. The availability of risk capital is measured in terms of venture capital invested in the state, and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants awarded to entrepreneurs in the states. In these measures, the 2010 Battelle report concluded that "Nebraska has little in the way of venture financing for emerging firms" [Battelle, 2010, p. 21]. (Page 923)

Career Pathways

With representatives of secondary and postsecondary programs, lead efforts in the local area to develop and implement career pathways within the local area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment. (Page 193)

The Career Pathways and CCR plan for Nebraska includes three phases: training, implementation, and full transition. Statewide training of all program staff will include redefining initial contact with students and developing an orientation to address a career pathway system for each student. When implemented, instructors will engage students to determine the level of need and they will collaboratively design a training plan that may include any, some, or all of the three training areas of employability skills, career readiness and college readiness.

During transition, Adult Education programs will be directed to core partners through the American Job Center delivery system, utilizing job search and additional training programs offered through the Department of Labor administered programs. Upon determination of additional barriers, other partner programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Health and Human Services will be consulted to provide support service training(s). (Page 693)

Nebraska VR is a recent recipient of a Career Pathway grant. The Career Pathway Advancement Project represents the next evolution of vocational rehabilitation by proactively improving the likelihood of economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities. The project will build off of existing Department of Labor career pathways initiatives in Information Technology, Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. It will expand partnerships with other agencies including Easter Seals Nebraska, Assistive Technology Partnership, Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Career Education and the Institute for Community Inclusion. Ultimately the project will allow VR eligible individuals over the course of the project to access career pathway partnerships with businesses and educational institutions. A proven Upskill/Backfill business model will be used to create opportunities for former VR eligible individuals to advance their careers and open up new opportunities for other VR eligible individuals. (Page 662)

A 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force begins with an awareness that the workforce will continue to grow and reflect the increasing diversity of America. While increasing numbers of individuals with disabilities will be entering the labor force, such individuals currently

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remain a largely untapped labor source. Women's employment rates will rise while the employment rates for men will decline slightly. The percentage of individuals from minority groups entering the workforce will also grow.

The workforce will become increasingly urban and the manufacturing sector will slowly decline while the service-producing sector will grow as will e-commerce. Technology and globalization will continue to shape the labor force and require a workforce with highly technical skills. How quickly graduate rehabilitation programs will revise curriculum to prepare graduates in a 21st understanding of the evolving labor force remains to be seen. Consequently Nebraska VR must provide staff with timely training on Nebraska labor market information and trends, career pathways, the world of work and career connections in order to equipping VR staff with the knowledge to counsel individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of work and career and provide effective employment services. The outreach and partnership efforts of our Business Account Managers with Nebraska businesses will be also be critical to understanding their respective labor needs in order for VR to prepare, train and offer skilled applicants with disabilities. (Page 673)

Nebraska VR staff will continue to serve on the new regional workforce boards which will now have a larger business representation. It is important that VR staff are aware of and promote among it clients, the jobs-driven, work-based learning, career pathways and industry sector initiatives put forth by the workforce development system.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

The Nebraska Department of Education Statewide Count of Special Education Students by Impairment shows the four largest impairment groups continue to be Specific Learning Disability, Other Health Impaired, Intellectual Disabilities and Autism. While Nebraska has one of the highest 4 year high school graduation rates in the country (89.68%) and 6 year graduation rates (91.1%), there is still concern for those students who have dropped out of school or who graduate but do not make a successful transition to employment and independence and become involved within the Juvenile Justice system or dependent on public assistance. The provision of pre-employment transition services will hopefully lead to a more successful transition for all students and youth with a disability into employment and adult life. (Page 681)

Move more individuals to economic self-sufficiency through the implementation of the Career Pathways Advancement Project. The CPAP is funded under a grant from RSA and uses an "Upskill/Backfill" model to train individuals in emerging and growing industry sectors. Career Pathway Recruiters will contact 1,200 former VR clients now working in targeted industry sectors such as information technology, manufacturing, transportation, distribution and logistics, to inform them of an opportunity to receive additional training and education to advance their careers. The grant will provide the necessary financial assistance to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in an established career pathway initiative in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Labor, several post-secondary educational institutions, and businesses. Approximately 50-60 individuals will move up the career pathway by upgrading their skills and knowledge, creating opportunities for other individuals with disabilities to backfill the vacant

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positions. Individuals with disabilities will be more likely to be economically self-sufficient as they advance upward in their career pathway in the targeted high demand sectors. (Page 687)

Career Pathways is a strategy that will support Nebraska's vision and goals for workforce development. In 2008, the Nebraska Department of Education/Career Technical Education adopted and implemented the National Career Pathway Model developed by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The model includes six career fields:

1. Business, Marketing & Management;
2. Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources;
3. Communication and Information Systems;
4. Human Services and Education;
5. Health Sciences and
6. Skilled and Technical Sciences.

The six career fields entail several professions and jobs. Career Pathways is discussed in further detail under State Strategies in the Combined State Plan. (Page 840)

Employment Networks

Section identified but no detailed information specifically addressing disability focused implementation. (Page (715-116)

Section identified but no detailed information specifically addressing disability focused implementation. (Page 769)

* 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>