

Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

a. State Rehabilitation Council.

a. 1. All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has:

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

a. 2. In accordance with Assurance (a)(1)(B), if selected, please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative’s term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	First	07/21
Parent Training and Information Center	Second	11/21
Client Assistance Program	First	02/23
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	First	06/21
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	First	09/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	First	08/21
Business, Industry, and Labor	First	11/21
Business, Industry, and Labor	First	11/21
Business, Industry, and Labor	VACANT	
Disability Advocacy Groups	First	06/21
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	First	08/21
Representatives of individuals who are blind and has difficulty representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves	First	02/22
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	N/A	

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Second	06/21
State Workforce Development Board	First	07/23
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	First	04/21

a. 3. If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in Section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.

The Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) has developed a system for tracking Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) member appointments and works very closely with the Council Chair regarding federal composition compliance. The VRAC has an active membership committee who assists with recruitment, engagement, and commitments. In addition, DVI maintains regular communication with the Office of Boards and Commissions to ensure all applicants are properly routed to the committee.

The Council currently has a vacancy for a member of business, industry, and labor. The member who occupied the role decided to no longer serve on the Council after his first term ended in December 2023. DVI is assisting the VRAC to find a qualified representative for this role by marketing it to the blind registry and through advocacy groups. DVI will continue to assist by advertising the opening in email blasts, newsletters, and on social media until the role is filled.

a. 4. In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council’s input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council’s annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.

The VRAC reviewed 2020-2022 correction action plan activities, program data, annual reports, 2021 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), and previous goal attainment and areas of weakness. The VRAC Chair convened an ad hoc committee to meet with DVI leadership over four consecutive weeks. During the committee meetings, the group reviewed and discussed the key take aways from the CSNA recommendations, existing goals and priorities,

and other agency strategies. The feedback DVI received from the VRAC was used to develop and tailor goals and strategies for the 2024 WIOA State Plan. When the committee meetings ended, the VRAC held a special meeting to review new goals, strategies, and priorities.

The VRAC recommended that the goals included the following:

1. Increase employment outcomes of total VR consumers, Supported Employment and transition students exiting high school by a minimum of 5% over previous year.
2. Increase the quality of employment outcomes for visual impairments by seeking positions with higher pay and advancement opportunities.
3. Revise the performance measure on the second and fourth quarter employment rate so it reflects national and regional indicators.
4. Develop strategies to improve data quality and participant / employer engagement.
5. Increase the median earnings for second quarter following exit to no less than \$18.00/hour.
6. Maintain current partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) providers offering Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) services.
7. Add more pre-ETS providers that specialize in visual impairments.
8. Increase the number of students receiving pre-ETS by 10%.
9. Ensure all transition students have the opportunity to (revised from ‘will’) participate in at least one internship, work-based learning experience, and/or apprenticeship prior to exit from secondary education.
10. Enhance employer and community partnerships that lead to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments.
11. Conduct proactive outreach at job fairs and reengage employers that have hired DVI jobseekers in the past.
12. Revise the measure that states ‘Support industry-specific training programs in high demand occupations based on Delaware labor market information, demonstrated by consumers earning industry recognized credentials aligned with acquired training and employment’ to indicate DVI will provide labor market information during the individual plan for employment development process, to help consumers make informed choices with setting their vocational goals.
13. Increase awareness and improve consumer engagement with DVI as both a resource and service provider.
14. Continue to improve the business partner tracking system.
15. Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach to all visually impaired communities to include closed and low incidence communities.
16. Utilize advocates to engage in outreach.
17. Create a series of regular consumer spotlights to be shared on social media including a mini-series that shows someone new to blindness start with the VR program and follow them through finding a job and their first day on the job.

18. Customer satisfaction – work with the VR general SRC to develop effective surveys and target hot topics and interests.
19. Delete goal to increase BEP opportunities, due to 100% growth in program participation over the last year and focus more on business engagement.

a. 5. Provide the VR agency’s response to the Council’s input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

1. Increase employment outcomes of total VR consumers, Supported Employment and transition students exiting high school by a minimum of 5% over previous year. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
2. Increase the quality of employment outcomes for visual impairments by seeking positions with higher pay and advancement opportunities. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
3. Revise the performance measure on the second and fourth quarter employment rate so it reflects national and regional statistics. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
4. Develop strategies to improve data quality and participant / employer engagement. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
5. Increase the median earnings for second quarter following exit to no less than \$18.00/hour. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
6. Maintain current partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) providers offering pre-ETS services. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
7. Add more pre-ETS providers that specialize in visual impairments. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
8. Increase the number of students receiving pre-ETS by 10%. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
9. Ensure all transition students have the opportunity to participate in at least one internship, work-based learning experience, and/or apprenticeship prior to exit from secondary education. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**

10. Enhance employer and community partnerships that lead to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
11. Conduct proactive outreach at job fairs and reengage employers that have hired DVI jobseekers in the past. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
12. Revise the measure that states ‘Support industry-specific training programs in high demand occupations based on Delaware labor market information, demonstrated by consumers earning industry recognized credentials aligned with acquired training and employment’ to indicate DVI will provide labor market information during the individual plan for employment development process, to help consumers make informed choices with setting their vocational goals. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
13. Increase awareness and improve consumer engagement with DVI as both a resource and service provider. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
14. Continue to improve the business partner tracking system. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
15. Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach to all visually impaired communities to include closed and low incidence communities. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
16. Utilize advocates to engage in outreach. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
17. Create a series of regular consumer spotlights to be shared on social media including a mini-series that shows someone new to blindness start with the VR program and follow them through finding a job and their first day on the job. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**
18. Customer satisfaction – work with the general VR SRC to develop effective surveys, to target hot topics and interests. **The agency agrees with this recommendation.**

19. Delete goal to increase BEP opportunities and focus more on business engagement, due to 100% growth in the program over the last year. **The agency agrees with this recommendation**

b. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

b. 1. A. Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment.

During 2021, DVI and the VRAC, or DVI's SRC, conducted a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to identify the rehabilitation needs, particularly the VR service needs, of individuals with visual impairments and those with significant disabilities. DVI partnered with the University of Delaware, Center for Disabilities Studies to conduct the CSNA. The instruments were designed to collect primary data from stakeholders including, consumers, community providers, interest groups, CRPs, business partners, DVI employees, and members of the public. Various tools and techniques were used to gather input such as a statewide public survey, face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys and focus groups.

The findings revealed the most frequently mentioned needs among consumers surveyed were employment/placement, access to services (including transportation), and assistive technology. Both consumers and staff identified the need to enhance employment/placement services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those who are eligible for supported employment. The survey indicated there are limited resources for providing comprehensive vocational and AT assessments, especially for individuals with multiple disabilities. The CRP findings indicated a lack of referrals and communication with DVI as barriers. In addition, CRPs reported service barriers such as independent living and on-the-job supports as barriers as well as DVI's history of not providing referrals. The business partners who responded indicated barriers were the need for additional supervision, lower production, and the perception that people with visual impairments lacked skills needed to perform essential functions.

DVI will continue to leverage opportunities to engage with stakeholders. This includes educational programs, community organizations, transportation providers, the medical community, several councils, service providers, employers, other state agencies, families, and consumers. DVI will continue to be an active partner with the other WIOA core partners which provides many regular opportunities for information sharing, planning and an overall effort to streamline services. During the monthly partner meetings, DVI shares information about vocational rehabilitation and learn what is available from other partners. DVI will also continue to participate in the Early Start to Supported Employment initiative, transition Community of Practice, and DE-General VR. Listening and being responsive to the needs of the community, engaging with multiple partners, and sharing information will assist DVI with improving services and helping the community better understand vision services and the abilities and needs of the individuals we serve. Engaging stakeholders and community partners will also assist DVI

with the goals of expanding Pre-employment Transition Services and increasing quality employment outcomes. Additional Pre-ETS programs for transition students have been developed, and the process of refining and expanding the business focused opportunities will continue.

The DVI strategic plan goals, along with the state plan goals and priorities, are designed to address the Social Determinants of Health and inequalities of people with visual impairments. These goals are designed to improve basic human needs and ultimately contribute to improved health and well-being. Examples include improved employment outcomes, access to transportation, increase social integration, access to vocational training, etc.

DVI is committed to using the identified strategies to improve services and help the visually impaired community, especially those facing social inequities and reemployment needs, with their career needs.

b. 1. B. Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

In the most recent CSNA report (2021) most people served were minorities and there was 5% increase in Hispanic people served from 2020 to 2021. Since then, services to minorities and underserved populations continued along the same trend. The need for improving information about and access to DVI services, especially for Spanish and other non-English speaking communities were identified. Feedback from the focus groups uncovered some fear in accessing services.

DVI completed strategic planning and designed goals that address the Social Determinants of Health and inequalities of people with visual impairments. These goals are designed to improve basic human needs and ultimately contribute to improved health and well-being. Examples include improved employment outcomes, access to transportation, increase social integration, access to vocational training, etc. DVI will increase relationships with organizations that serve minority communities, increase outreach activities by participating in events located in areas with large amount of non-English speaking minorities, and work with community leaders to help support efforts. More outreach, resources in alternate languages and formats, greater hours of operation, more staff and staff training are needed to properly serve all minorities.

b. 1. C. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

Access, both physical and electronic, is an ongoing need for individuals with visual impairments. As a core partner of the Statewide Workforce Development System, DVI provides assistive technology to the American Job Centers, libraries, and other core partners as needed. This is the DVI contribution to the WIOA partner infrastructure agreement. DVI works closely with the Division of Employment and Training who is primarily responsible for operations at the

American Job Center to ensure centers are outfitted with screen readers, large monitors, zoom text, and adaptive keyboards. This improves the physical accessibility of the center for individuals with visual impairments to utilize the resources available to the public. Additionally, DVI worked with the core partners to test the current systems used by the public to access jobs. Both platforms were fully accessible to screen readers. And finally, DVI is engaged in several accessibility initiatives throughout the state and works closely with the Department of Technology and Information Accessibility Manager. DVI is also aware that many partners are unsure of how to accommodate staff with visual impairments, which reinforces the importance of DVI remaining actively engaged in activities with the other core partners.

b. 1. D. Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

Assistive Technology (AT) remains an important issue to consumers, especially youth with disabilities. Acquiring and being trained on AT was the most frequently cited difficulty in participating in education or training and with obtaining employment. Transition services were also identified as needs for students with disabilities, with more communication and coordination between education and VR due to confusion among LEAs, providers, students, and families regarding the difference between the two separate VR agencies in Delaware – DVI and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVI and DVR have a memorandum of understanding to assist with the coordination of referrals and to identify how DVI and DVR will collaborate on cases when shared expertise is necessary and in the best interest of the consumer.

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

Although the CSNA did not identify gaps for establishment, development, or improvement of community rehabilitation programs (CRP), it did identify the need to increase community partners. DVI recognizes the need to establish more relationships with CRPs and to provide training and technical assistance to further build their capacity with understanding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

c. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies

c. 1. Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and

DVI is fortunate to that the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC- the agency SRC) consistently provides valuable feedback and advises the agency during the regular course

of work throughout the year. The VRAC members are committed to promoting quality outcomes for people with severe visual impairments and dedicated to taking an active role in developing goals, assisting with outreach, and collaborating for assessment activities. DVI is very transparent with the VRAC and throughout the year, the council reviewed corrective action plan activities, program data, annual reports, 2021 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), previous goal attainment and areas that had opportunities for improvement. The VRAC and DVI jointly developed and agreed to the new goals and priorities which were developed after several meetings with the VRAC state plan committee and the full council. The VRAC Chair convened an ad hoc committee to meet for four consecutive weeks. During the committee meetings, the group reviewed and discussed the CSNA recommendations and key take aways, goals and priorities, and other agency initiatives. The feedback DVI received from the VRAC was used to develop and customize the goals for the state plan.

c. 2. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies - 2

Goal 1: Provide high quality employment outcomes for individuals with visual impairments.

- 1.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Increase employment outcomes of total VR consumers, Supported Employment and transition students exiting high school by a minimum of 5% over previous year.
- 1.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Maintain an employment rate of 40% at second quarter and 40% at fourth quarter following exit from the VR program.
- 1.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Achieve median earnings of no less than \$18.00 per hour second quarter following exit from VR program.

Strategies for achieving high quality employment outcomes for individuals with visual impairments are:

- a) Comprehensive staff training, increase service providers, collaborate with WIOA core partners, collaborate with the SILC and other partnerships that will result in successful career outcomes for people who have severe visual impairments.
- b) Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach and creating videos for Division website and social media platforms to foster awareness and showcase service delivery.
- c) Engage youth by offering work-based learning experience (WBLE) opportunities to all students and fostering parent engagement utilizing partnerships with PIC and LEAs. DVI will also utilize our blind and visually impaired advocates to provide support and resources for students.

- d) DVI will seek additional educational resources from providers that specialize in services for the blind and visually impaired to effectively prepare consumers for opportunities with jobs in demand, high paying jobs and jobs that lead to career advancement. DVI will also engage with its past successful consumers to provide resources and advice to current job seekers.

Goal 2: Provide quality Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with visual impairments.

2.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Continue to build current partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation providers offering pre-ETS services.

2.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Increase the number of students receiving pre-ETS services by 10% over previous year.

2.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Through internal and external service provision, ensure all transition students can participate in at least one WBLE prior to exit from secondary education.

Strategies for achieving the provision of quality Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with visual impairments high quality employment outcomes for individuals with visual impairments are:

- a) Comprehensive staff training, increase service providers, collaborate with WIOA core partners, collaborate with the SILC and other partnerships that will result in successful career outcomes for people who have severe visual impairments.
- b) Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach and creating videos for Division website and social media platforms to foster awareness and showcase service delivery.
- c) Engage youth by offering WBLE opportunities to all students and fostering parent engagement utilizing partnerships with PIC and LEAs. DVI will also utilize our blind and visually impaired advocates to provide support and resources for students.
- d) DVI will seek additional educational resources from providers that specialize in services for the blind and visually impaired to effectively prepare consumers for opportunities with jobs in demand, high paying jobs and jobs that lead to career advancement. DVI will also engage with its past successful consumers to provide resources and advice to current job seekers.

Goal 3: Enhance employer and community partnerships leading to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments.

3.1 Performance Objective and Measure: In collaboration with the VRAC and other community partners, develop and document opportunities to engage and educate employers specifically

around the employment of individuals with visual impairments with active participation in job fairs and reengaging past business partnerships.

3.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Maintain current partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) related to training, supported employment and/or placement services and develop new partnerships with providers specializing in serving individuals with visual impairments.

Strategies for achieving the enhancement of employer and community partnerships leading to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments:

- a) Comprehensive staff training, increase service providers, collaborate with WIOA core partners, collaborate with the SILC and other partnerships that will result in successful career outcomes for people who have severe visual impairments.
- b) Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach and creating videos for Division website and social media platforms to foster awareness and showcase service delivery.
- c) Engage youth by offering WBLE opportunities to all students and fostering parent engagement utilizing partnerships with PIC and LEAs. DVI will also utilize our blind and visually impaired advocates to provide support and resources for students.
- d) DVI will seek additional educational resources from providers that specialize in services for the blind and visually impaired to effectively prepare consumers for opportunities with jobs in demand, high paying jobs and jobs that lead to career advancement. DVI will also engage with its past successful consumers to provide resources and advice to current job seekers.

Goal 4: Increase awareness and improve consumer engagement with DVI services.

4.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop system to track outreach events to document and plan the engagement and awareness of services offered by DVI and DVI's mission.

4.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach to all visually impaired communities to include closed and low incidence communities that utilizes visually impaired advocates for engagement.

4.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a series of videos to post on DVI's website and social media accounts that showcase consumer stories, awareness of blindness and visual impairments and services offered by DVI.

4.4 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a plan to participate in community legislative events to increase awareness and promote DVI services.

4.5 Performance Objective and Measure: Work with our VRAC to develop effective customer satisfaction surveys and target hot topics interests.

Strategies for achieving the enhancement of employer and community partnerships leading to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments:

- a) Comprehensive staff training, increase service providers, collaborate with WIOA core partners, collaborate with the SILC and other partnerships that will result in successful career outcomes for people who have severe visual impairments.
- b) Develop a plan for increasing targeted outreach and creating videos for Division website and social media platforms to foster awareness and showcase service delivery.
- c) Engage youth by offering WBLE opportunities to all students and fostering parent engagement utilizing partnerships with PIC and LEAs. DVI will also utilize our blind and visually impaired advocates to provide support and resources for students.
- d) DVI will seek additional educational resources from providers that specialize in services for the blind and visually impaired to effectively prepare consumers for opportunities with jobs in demand, high paying jobs and jobs that lead to career advancement. DVI will also engage with its past successful consumers to provide resources and advice to current job seekers.

d. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

d. 1. Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

Goal 1: Provide quality employment outcomes for individuals with visual impairments.

1.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Increase employment outcomes of total VR consumers, Supported Employment and transition students exiting high school by a minimum of 5% over previous year.

Achieved: employment outcomes increased by 21% increase from 21-22 (19-23) and 9% from 22-23 (23-25).

1.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Maintain an employment rate of 90% at second quarter and 80% at fourth quarter following exit from the VR program.

Partially Achieved: DVI had a combined rate of 42% and 41% respectively. DVI plans to develop strategies to improve data quality, participant engagement and employer engagement.

1.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Achieve median earnings of no less than \$16.00 per hour second quarter following exit from VR program.

Achieved: The average hourly rate was \$20.96 in 22 (with 27.5 hours per week worked) and \$24.08 in 23 (with 30 hours per week worked)

Goal 2: Provide quality Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with visual impairments.

2.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Maintain current partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) providers offering pre-ETS services.

Achieved: DVI maintained statewide partnerships and expanded to providers outside the state to offer more options for pre-ETS students and families.

2.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Increase the number of students receiving pre-ETS services by 10% over previous year.

Partially Achieved: The number of DVI students decreased 20% over the last year; however, the number of students engaged in pre-ETS activities and activities offered increased. DVI intends to increase the number of students receiving services and collaborate with the Parent Information Center (PIC) to help promote parent engagement.

2.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Through internal and external service provision, ensure all transition students participate in at least one internship, paid/unpaid work experience and/or apprenticeship prior to exit from secondary education.

Partially Achieved: DVI was unsuccessful in engaging all students. DVI did achieve 60% (17 students) participation and will continue to collaborate with the SRC, DOE, LEAs, TVIs and COMS to improve participation and engage early. Nearly 30% (8) of DVI's students exited secondary education and entered post-secondary education since the Plan revision in 22. Due to the availability of opportunity with available programming during COVID and scheduling, they were not able to participate.

Goal 3: Enhance employer and community partnerships that lead to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments.

3.1 Performance Objective and Measure: In collaboration with DVI's SRC and other community partners, develop and track formal/informal opportunities (i.e., individual and group employer outreach activities, collaboration activities with other disability groups, conferences, workshops, etc.) to engage and educate employers specifically around the employment of individuals with visual impairments.

Achieved: DVI created regular sensitivity and awareness training to our CRP staff, other state agencies, local law enforcement and employers that were unfamiliar with blindness and visual impairment.

3.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Maintain current partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) related to training, supported employment and/or placement services.

Achieved: DVI created regular sensitivity and awareness training to our CRP staff, other state agencies, local law enforcement and employers that were unfamiliar with blindness and visual impairment. DVI staff worked with providers to engage and educate community employers of all sizes by visiting locations to collaborate on strategies to employ the most significantly disabled jobseekers.

3.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Support industry-specific training programs in high demand occupations based on Delaware labor market information, demonstrated by consumers earning industry recognized credentials aligned with acquired training and employment.

Achieved: DVI had several consumers earn the recognized credential of Certified Massage Therapist. Massage Therapists earn a median annual salary of \$49,860 and the demand for Massage Therapists is expected to grow by 18% over the next decade. That growth is much faster than the average for all occupations. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/massage-therapists.htm>

3.4 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a business database that tracks engagement and demonstrates authentic business partnerships that result in competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with visual impairments.

Achieved: The Employment Services Specialist team created Business Partners tracking database in 2022. The database continues to evolve and assists the Business Services team to better meet the needs of business partners by tracking services used or needed to onboard new employees with visual impairments. It is also be used to track technical assistance to business partners, number of consumers hired and location of placements (county, city, etc.).

Goal 4: Increase awareness and improve access to DVI services.

4.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop system to track staff outreach events to ensure DVI participation.

Achieved: DVI developed and began using a tracking system for outreach to collect participation at events. Although still new, the tool will be used to help plan and target outreach.

4.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a plan for increasing outreach to underserved communities (i.e., Latino, Amish and Veterans) as well the medical community.

Achieved: DVI routinely participated in community outreach events designed for identified populations and those designed for other low incidence populations. For example, DVI presented and/or exhibited at events for veterans, the unhoused, and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community. All events are hosted by partners in the community, at state service centers and libraries throughout the state.

4.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a series of videos to post on DVI's website and social media accounts that showcase consumer stories, awareness of blindness and visual impairments and services offered by DVI.

Achieved: DVI Communications staff post relevant content daily on Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG), and X. This content encompasses events the DVI host for consumers, staff training, accessibility tips, eye disease information, new developments in technology for individuals with severe visual impairments and partner collaboration.

4.4 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a plan to participate in community events hosted by state legislators to increase awareness and promote services.

Achieved: DVI currently attends all legislator sponsored initiatives such as job fairs and community resource events.

Goal 5: Provide quality entrepreneurial opportunities in the Business Enterprise Program.

5.1 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a process and procedure to document the consumers have been informed of opportunities for participation in the BEP program.

Achieved: In cases where Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is deemed a viable Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) goal for a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) participant, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) educates them on this option, although there is no formal process involved. Since the last plan, the BEP program has four new potential operators, two of whom completed training and earned provisional licenses, and one who completed the provisional step and is now fully licensed. This is a dramatic increase as the program had no new blind vendors for several years.

5.2 Performance Objective and Measure: Develop a Pre-ETS activity to expose students with visual impairments to work opportunities through the BEP program.

Achieved: DVI invited the BEP blind vendors to participate in the Children's Beach House weekend programs. The event, hosted twice a year by DVI, is a way for youth with visual impairments to expand, demonstrate and practice skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum. Activities encompass areas that include career, education, independent living, and orientation and mobility. The VR team and blind vendors have attended as guest speakers and/or conduct an activity. During these sessions, students discuss BEP entrepreneurial opportunities.

5.3 Performance Objective and Measure: Engage the Blind Vendors Committee and BEP Operators in the VR process for consumers who express an interest in the program (i.e., develop job shadow, internship, and peer mentoring opportunities).

Achieved: The BVC interview process has undergone revision, now occurring early in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process. This adjustment aims to ensure that the candidate is not only a viable option for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) but also a good fit for the program. Upon approval by the BVC, the candidate becomes involved in BVC meetings and gains access to opportunities for training with Operators/Canteen.

d. 2. Performance on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and

All the overarching goals for DVI contribute to ensuring compliance with, and successful achievement of, the reporting of the performance measures under Section 116 of WIOA. In response to an evaluation of data from the agency's federal reports, and regulatory and sub-regularly guidance, the agency has developed, and continues to increase and improve, activities that: increase collaboration with workforce partners, elevate counselor knowledge, improve data quality, enhance internal controls, and evaluate program outcomes.

DVI completed policy revision for policy related to WIOA performance measures and provided comprehensive training for VR staff. DVI has reestablished a relationship with the Division of Unemployment Insurance for the purpose of obtaining employment data for the second and fourth quarters. In addition, DVI utilizes the SWIS system to gather employment information for people employed outside the state. To ensure reliable and complete data is being tracked and reported, DVI meets with the Information Resource Management team monthly to review updates to the case management system and prioritize work. This process has proven to be beneficial and will continue as reporting requirements change and system modifications are needed for reporting data. Additionally, DVI and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DE-G) meet regular to review performance measures and fiscal obligations. This transition to new agency leadership, tracking mechanisms being put in place and staff training is constantly evolving. This will ensure VR professionals understand the importance of quality data collection, by learning the process of tracking and reporting data manually as well as in VICR once updates are complete, and information will be available for staff to review to identify data reporting errors and to decrease the potential for information being lost in the event of staff turnover.

The results of the statewide PY22 indicators are represented in the table below. Collectively, DVI and DVR made significant strides in the earnings, credential attainment, and measurable skills gain sections but had discrepancies in the second and fourth quarter after close. The two VR agencies are committed to determining the reason both agencies struggled to meet the target

and determine next steps. A management workgroup has been formed to analyze data, trends, review regional statistics, investigate reporting errors, and cross-reference consumer data with the unemployment insurance records.

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2022 Actual Level Delaware	PY 2022 Actual Level National
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	0.48	0.49	0.42	0.56
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	0.48	0.5	0.41	0.53
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	3500	3815	4494	5130
Credential Attainment Rate	0.25	0.26	0.52	0.38
Measurable Skill Gains	0.4	0.44	0.49	0.49
Effectiveness in Serving Employers*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

d. 3. The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (Sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).

DVI increased contracts with nationwide programs to expand pre-ETS, independent living and supports for college-bound high school students with cognitive disabilities. DVI contracted with an expert in supported employment and traumatic brain injury to provide comprehensive training for staff in customized employment and business engagement. Additionally, DVI contracted with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and the Department of Labor Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to perform independent living services and contributes to the SILC state plan. Finally, DVI continues to partner with the Department of Education, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, National Alliance on Partnership in Equity, and local school districts to pilot a program designed to ensure the success of ALL students with disabilities in high school career and technical education (CTE) pathways. DVI created innovative programming by partnering with vendors who specialize in informed choice, service navigation, and pre-ETS group services.

e. Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

e. 1. Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

e. 2. If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under Section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

DVI will ensure people with visual impairments, who face multiple barriers to employment due to the severity of their disability(s), will have the opportunity to achieve successful employment outcomes by utilizing a person-centered approach, customizing employment, ensuring informed choice, and encouraging self-advocacy. DVI will utilize Title I and Title VI funds to ensure consumers have the support, customization, coaching, and skills needed to successfully obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment. The following plan outlines DVI strategy for allocation of Title VI funds and continuous improvement.

1. Reserve 50% of the Title VI allotment for the provision of supported employment services, including extended services, for youth with the most significant disabilities.
2. No less than 10% of non-Federal expenditures are used as match towards the 50% allotment reserved for supported employment services, including extended services, for youth with the most significant disabilities; match must be met by September 30 of the FFY of appropriation to fully expend or carryover any unobligated portion of the reserved funds.
3. Administrative costs for Title VI are not to exceed 2.5%.

Supported Employment Title VI funds will be used for the provision of supported employment only after the consumer is actively working in community integrated employment setting.

Allowable costs include:

1. **Ongoing Support Services** are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment. Ongoing support services begin at the time of job placement and last until the transition to extended services. Services may include activities such as an assessment of employment stability, and the provision or coordination of specific services at or away from the worksite that are needed to maintain stability. Other examples include the provision of skilled job trainers for the individual at the worksite, social skills training,

follow-up services, facilitation of natural supports at the worksite. Title I funds may also be utilized for ongoing supports.

2. **VR Extended Services** are only available to youth with the most significant disabilities. Youth may receive extended services for up to four years or until they reach the age of 25. Extended services are ongoing services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment and can be provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resources.
3. **Post-Employment Services** are available if services are required to maintain or regain employment or advance in employment.

Title I (Basic VR) are used for all services that are prohibited under Title VI but necessary for supported employment eligible consumers to achieve their employment outcomes. Examples include:

1. Job placement
2. Comprehensive assessment
3. Skills training
4. Interview clothing
5. Assistive technology

DVI utilizes the services of vendors, on a fee-for-service basis, to provide comprehensive supported employment services for those individuals with severe visual impairments and the most significant barriers to employment. Consumers and/or their representatives select the vendor to provide these services.

Training has been conducted with all counselors that emphasizes that the provision of extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities, under appropriate circumstances, can be provided up to four years or until they reach the age of 25. It is critical that this training identifies the non-delegable nature of this provision in WIOA. Ongoing training with counselors is provided to ensure accurate use and tracking of supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities. DVI will continue to provide staff with training, oversight, and guidance regarding Title VI fiscal regulations to ensure costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary.

DVI has a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) that outlines the partnership agreement between the two vocational rehabilitation agencies. This agreement assures all job seekers with disabilities are afforded swift recommendations for available vocational rehabilitation services in the State. Additionally, DVI provides itinerant Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists to serve school age children in the state. These services, along with the provisions for transition, are outlined in an MOU with the Delaware Department of Education and all Delaware school districts. The MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities for all parties

regarding transition from high school to adult life, includes clearly defined explanations of the VR process and the role of transition within workforce system. Unused funds will be transferred to DVR when necessary.

e. 3. Supported employment services may be provided with Title 1 or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with Section 101(a)(22) and Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.

DVI will continue to provide Supported Employment services to individuals with visual impairments and co-occurring disabilities including, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, physical impairments, and disabilities due to mental health, that make long-term supports necessary for the individual's success in maintaining integrated and competitive employment.

DVI will continue to evaluate reemployment needs and workforce inequities. DVI will work with CRPs to develop creative ways to overcome workforce challenges.

DVI will continue to assure that all opportunities meet the requirements of competitive integrated employment, earn at least minimum wage, have access to the same workplace benefits available to all employees, and have the same opportunities for career advancement.

DVI will continue to focus on the provision of quality services by assessing the level of employment integration and competitiveness. DVI will continue to assess workplace access and accessibility meets the needs of people with visual impairments. Additionally, all contracted vendors shall maintain a program of professional development for those employees within its organization who provide job placement services by actively participating in staff development training opportunities for visual impairments and blindness, job-site trainers, employment specialists and SE managers.

Supported employment services begin at job placement; however, vocational rehabilitation funds can be used to provide necessary VR services prior to job placement. The scope and extent of contracted supported employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities shall include:

- Assessment services to assist consumers to select an appropriate vocational goal consistent with their unique strengths, resources, interests, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice.
- Job development and job placement in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) based on the assessment results.
- Comprehensive onsite or offsite job coaching to enable the individual to become stabilized in their employment.

- Upon stabilization, DVI will coordinate extended services with the identified agency/entity/resource. After successful transition to extended services, DVI will continue to facilitate supports and services to address any issues that may potentially impact job retention until 90 days after the successful transition to extended services.
- VR may provide extended services as necessary to employed youth for up to 48 months or until they reach the age of 25 if external extended resources are not available.

e. 4. Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a) and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19)(v).

In Delaware, eligible people with developmental disabilities have access to comprehensive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), VR services from DVI or the Department of Labor/Vocational Rehabilitation Division (DVR-General), and school-to-work transition services from the Department of Education.

General VR (DVR): Since DVI is the agency for the blind and DVR is the general VR agency, it is extremely important that the agencies work collaboratively to ensure all qualified people with developmental disabilities receive VR services. As such, the general and blind agencies maintain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which defines the relationship between the two VR agencies. This formal interagency agreement defines responsibilities, dispute resolution procedures, financial responsibilities, and procedures to effectively coordinate among the agencies.

Division for Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS): DVI collaborates with DDDS for the provision of Supported Employment (SE) services to consumers with blindness and intellectual disabilities. If eligible, individuals may receive extended services from DDDS through one of three Medicaid HCBS waivers. Each waiver has defined criteria for eligibility, the services available are very similar. They include employment navigation, career exploration and assessment, individual & small group SE, Social Security benefits counseling, financial coaching, non-medical transportation, personal care (including a self-directed component), Orientation & Mobility, and assistive technology. The waiver is intended to compliment VR services by offering extended services, personal care and customized services for people who may have had unsuccessful employment experiences. To avoid gaps in services, interagency coordination begins before the consumer completes the SE process with DVI. Once DVI makes a referral, DDDS performs an individualized review of eligibility, application status (if applicable), and existing resources. The goal is to have a streamlined process that assists in identifying all available programs and resources, expand and improve employment services to

people with significant disabilities, and maximize the use of comparable benefits. DDDS currently uses three Medicaid waivers for the provision of SE extended services.

Early Start to Supported Employment Model (ESSE): For several years, DDDS, DVI, DVR, and DOE have collaboratively worked with eligible students, aged 14 and above, to ensure successful transitions from school into employment, training/education, or both. DVI-VR works closely with all agencies to encourage SE eligible students with visual impairments to participate in the ESSE model. ESSE was designed to minimize gaps between exiting school and beginning employment by encouraging students with intellectual disabilities to begin the SE process up to three years prior to exiting school. The goal is for students to experience the success and possible pitfalls of employment before their secondary education program ends.

f. Annual Estimates

f. 1. A. VR Program; and

The numbers below reflect population, an estimate of people in Delaware with vision difficulties, and furthered narrowed by an estimate of people who would qualify as visually impaired and be eligible for services. Furthermore, the estimate reflects the need to perform more outreach to locate eligible consumers and/or determine if VR services are desired.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
n/a	455	180	\$8333	n/a

Year	FFY24	FFY25	FFY26	FFY27
Population (18-64 years of age)	599,700	605,697	611,754	617,871
Number Visual Difficulties	11,394	11,508	11,623	11,739
Percent of DE Population	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
% with severe VI (4%)	455	460	465	470

Methodology: To arrive at accurate predictions, DVI reviewed population estimates from the Open Data Network¹ and the U.S. Census Bureau² as well as disability data from Cornell

¹ DE Population Change- Open Data Network

² U.S. Census Bureau

University Disability Statistics³. According to sources, the Delaware population increased 8.4% since the 2010 census (approximately 1% per year) and is predicted to see similar growth over the next few years. In addition, three previous years of survey information from Cornell University demonstrated that 2% (avg.) of the state’s 18 to 64-year-old population indicated they have severe visual difficulties. See table below for additional information.

f. 1. B. Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
n/a	8	8	13,000/person	n/a

Year	FFY24	FFY25	FFY26	FFY27
Estimated VR consumers served (Title VI)	8	9	9	10

Methodology: In order to produce accurate predictions, DVI reviewed three years of past VR data to determine the annual average SE consumer rate. DVI estimates that 4.8% of the total served each year will receive SE.

g. Order of Selection

g. 1. Pursuant to Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

The agency is not implementing an OOS and all eligible individuals will be served.

g. 2. A. The justification for the order

The designated state unit does not foresee implementing an order of selection.

³ Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2017). Disability Statistics from the American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved from [Cornell University Disability Statistics website](#).

g. 2. B. The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

The Division for the Visually Impaired anticipates having sufficient resources and funding streams to serve all eligible individuals making application for VR services which will preclude DVI from implementing an order of selection wait list.

g. 2. C. The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

The designated state unit does not foresee implementing an order of selection.

g. 3. Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?

NO

h. Waiver of Statewideness.

Delaware DVI is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.

i. 1. Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

Managers of each program within DVI are responsible for evaluating training needs for the staff in their unit. Regarding the provision of VR services, DVI has a Social Services Senior Administrator (SSSA) who oversees the VR program, including career services and the Business Enterprise Program. The SSSA is responsible for employee development and determines training needs through performance planning and evaluation, requests from or conversations with staff, case reviews, RSA 911 errors and customer satisfaction surveys. Based on feedback, training is developed and coordinated to address program needs. In addition, with the use of tuition reimbursement, DVI encourages counselors to take the necessary courses to obtain Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials to fortify the knowledge, skills and abilities used to carry out their job duties. Once courses are complete, DVI will fund the CRC test and ongoing continuing education.

DVI counselors work statewide with consumers of all eligible ages and provide the full array of services, such as: assessment, eligibility determinations, benefits counseling, job site visits, school visits/IEP meetings, wrap around service referral and coordination, person centered case

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management, and counseling & guidance. Additionally, DVI counselors participate in outreach events, CSAVR/NCSAB conferences, workforce development and American Job Center collaboration, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (DVI-SRC).

In addition to the staff providing direct VR services, the agency is responsible for the comprehensive service provision to address a wide range of needs for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These ancillary positions provide either technical, administrative, fiscal or support roles in support of VR services. These positions are state funded*, and staff utilize a time tracking system (Timesheet Plus) to determine time and effort toward the support of VR consumers and the VR grant.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Administrative Specialist I	1	1	2
Office Manager	1	0	1
Employment Specialist - Adult	2	0	4
Employment Specialist - Youth	1	0	2
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (II & Senior)	5	2	6
VR District Administrator	1	0	1
Business Enterprise Program Director	1	0	1
Business Enterprise Employment Specialist	0	1	1
VR Senior Administrator	1	0	1
*Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist	4	2	8
*Vision Rehab Therapist	4	1	6
*Assistive Technology Trainer	3	1	5
*Fiscal Analysts (I-V)	5	1	5

i. 1. D. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:

The Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) has five available counselor positions. Over the last four years, DVI has maintained 80% of those positions with average turnover. Inconsistent

caseload, due largely to the public health emergency, over the last three years resulted in each DVI counselor maintaining an average of forty people on their caseload. However, unwinding from the public health emergency has resulted in a 10% spike in VR cases from the end of PY22 through the second quarter of PY23.

DVI historically has grown 3% annually, which is consistent with national averages of individuals with severe visual impairments. While the current growth is significantly greater than normal, it is expected to stabilize and realign with previous averages. With 3% annual growth and available counselor positions, DVI can continue to operate within a 1:50 counselor to consumer ratio. DVI will monitor caseloads to ensure current service levels are maintained and will adjust staffing accordingly. Additionally, DVI can utilize established partnerships with contractual certified vocational rehabilitation counselors CRCs to mitigate unexpected growth or spikes in caseload.

i. 1. E. Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:

Year	PY24	PY25	PY26	PY27	PY28
Total served VR General and SE	180	185	191	197	203

i. 2. A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Delaware does not have an institution of higher education with a program to prepare Vocational Rehabilitation professionals. VR professionals are encouraged to pursue regional or online training programs.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

i. 2. B. The VR agency’s plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel

who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

DVI has partnership agreements with the University of Delaware, Salus University, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Pennsylvania College of Optometry to provide internships for graduate students majoring in Rehabilitation Education and other closely related fields of study. These partnerships afford an intern the opportunity to participate in the work environment of VR Service delivery and the delivery of other services to support VR consumers during the VR process. Interns are assigned working mentors in the VR program, as well as, working in partnership with other field services to gain the broad scope of knowledge needed to become a successful rehabilitation professional. DVI utilizes the internship process to introduce college students to the vision rehabilitation field and assess their qualifications for employment should a vacancy exist.

DVI developed a partnership with the Delaware Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB operates a Selective Placement Registry for the State of Delaware. This Registry lists qualified persons with disabilities from various backgrounds who have been determined eligible to fill specific job classifications within the state. State agencies are free to select qualified individuals from this registry without going through the normal state recruitment process, thereby streamlining the process for any qualified individual with a disability who may choose to apply for positions. Additionally, the state Division of Human Resources worked with the State Council for Persons with Disabilities-Employment First Oversight Commission to develop a paid work-based learning program for people with disabilities interested in gaining the experience necessary to qualify for state positions. This program offers potential candidates the opportunity to experience positions, that match their career aspirations, skills, and education. Their time in these work experiences can be counted towards the required qualifications of the position.

In addition, DVI shares vacancies with various advocacy group chairpersons and program chairs of universities in the region that prepare professionals in rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, and teachers of students with visual impairments. They are asked to encourage qualified members, specific to the vacant position, to apply when vacancies occur.

Recent challenges have made recruiting and retaining qualified personnel difficult. DVI had a large turnover in our VR program but were nearly fully staffed by January 2023. The DSA has developed new processes to address recruitment issues. For example, they streamlined the recruiting steps by assuming some of the process that is typically done by hiring managers. The state has also allowed for workplace flexibility through the Alternate Work Arrangement (AWA) which allows DVI employees to work with consumers virtually or in-person (based on consumer need). This policy made it possible for counselors to geographically expand and serve people in a larger area. The AWA has significantly reduced travel time for consumers and staff and enhanced recruiting options.

i. 2. C. Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:

DVI staff receive annual performance reviews based on expectations related to agency goals and the expectations of the position. The annual review, online surveys and regular meetings with staff provide opportunity to discuss staff training needs and outline plans for ensuring staff have access to training opportunities. DVI encourages professional development in areas such as best practices, assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology and utilizes distance learning, webinars, regional and national conferences in addition to training provided by the State of Delaware through the Delaware Learning Center (DLC).

DVI uses the DLC to assign and track professional development. Based on performance evaluations and needs assessments, the Social Services Senior Administrator for VR, and other supervisors work with staff to provide them with the training needed to perform their job duties as efficiently and effectively as possible. DVI worked with the DSA training office to receive guidance on how to utilize more of the Delaware Learning Center for Division purposes.

And finally, the VR program utilizes Learning Management System (YesLMS) to enhance staff development. This system has 149 courses available and offers the option to add personalized programmatic training. The system is also used assign and track training for new and current staff. Having this resource expands cross-training opportunities and demonstrate their contribution to consumers throughout the VR process.

i. 3. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

Currently, all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have master's degree in Rehabilitation, or a related field and one is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). The agency follows recruitment practices established by the state to recruit, prepare, and retain qualified personnel. Although it is not a requirement of the State for VR Counselors to hold their CRC, DVI holds this as a professional standard for any practicing VR Counselor and as such, DVI encourages counselors to take the necessary courses to obtain Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials to fortify the knowledge, skills and abilities used to carry out their job duties. DVI supports counselors this with the use of tuition reimbursement, once courses are complete, DVI will fund the CRC test and ongoing continuing education.

i. 4. Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

When an applicant for services requests an interpreter, DVI staff reviews and selects from a list of local professional interpreting services with whom the State of Delaware has contractual agreements. The state contracts offer hundreds of languages, sign language interpreters, and written transcription services. The multi-language and sign language services are available in person or virtually and all can be accessed on-demand. All written materials are disseminated in the appropriate media: Braille, large print, tape, or electronic file, as well as Spanish for various forms/brochures.

i. 5. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Every program within DVI provides services to students with visual impairments. This includes VR, Education, ILS, Orientation & Mobility, and the AT Training Center. DVI administration and staff maintain a close working relationship with the DDOE administration as well as administrators and educators within each school district. DVI staff work with every district and charter school to support students with visual impairments to address their education needs, teach the expanded core curriculum, and coordinate participation in transition and pre-ETS services.

The DVI Education Administrator participates in Special Education Leadership meetings and the VI Collaborative along with DDOE representatives, school districts, families, and other stakeholders. The Education and VR Administrators participate in the monthly transition cadre meetings along with VR Transition Counselors, TVIs, district transition personnel, DOE administrators, other state agencies, families, and community providers.

DVI is part of the Delaware Community of Practice on Transition and is a partner on various transition initiatives, including PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities and the Annual Transition Conference.

j. Coordination with Education Officials.

j. 1. Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.

DVI is uniquely positioned to coordinate the transition of students with visual impairments from school to VR services through the comprehensive structure of the division and the agency's participation in statewide transition activities. DVI has both an Education Services and a VR program offered by the Division, which allows the agency to begin working with children as soon as a visual impairment is identified.

DVI's Education Program employs Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) who provide assessment, direct instruction, and consultation services to approximately 300 students with visual impairments annually through an itinerant model. The TVIs work with local education agencies (LEAs), Charter Schools, private schools, and parents of home-schooled children statewide to ensure all students with visual impairments can access educational programs equal to that of their peers. This relationship provides the DVI VR program with the opportunity for early identification of students who may be potentially eligible for VR services, to educate and engage families early in the transition process, and to assist the VR Counselors and schools with coordinating and planning for transition services, including pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS).

DVI recognizes the need to get information to families as early as possible. As such, the VR program employs a Pre-ETS Coordinator who works closely with the internal VR and Education teams to ensure updated information and forms related to Pre-ETS and VR services are made available to families and schools prior to students beginning the transition process. Given the additional supports often required for students with visual impairments to participate in Pre-ETS, DVI encourages the application for VR services for students in 8th grade or who are turning 14 years old. This allows the VR Counselor to become an integral part of the student's IEP team and to assist with the coordination of ~~several~~ services to prepare the student for vocational success upon completion of high school. These services can include comprehensive vocational assessment, career exploration, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, self-advocacy training, preparation for post-secondary education or training, assistive technology (AT) assessment and training, independent living (ILS)/low vision services, and orientation and mobility (O&M).

Referrals for VR services are received primarily from the DVI Education Program; however, they are accepted from any source. DVI recently employed a newly licensed teacher of the visually impaired, whose own visual impairment and active involvement in the NTACTION Youth Engagement Transition Initiative (YETI), inspired her to inquire about assisting DVI with transition. The plan is to expand her teaching role to include the internal coordination of transition and pre-ETS activities. This TVI will work closely with the VR Pre-ETS Coordinator and leadership to develop seamless procedures to ensure ease of access for transitioning youth and their families.

DVI continues to develop several transition programs for students with visual impairments to participate in during breaks in the school year. All programs within DVI collaborate to provide students with visual impairments opportunities to learn and practice a wide range of career and independent living skills. The programs provide the students and DVI team opportunities to build rapport and get to know each other, the students become familiar with the services DVI offers, and students spend time with and learn from peers from across the state. These programs include Transition Spring Break, Children's Beach House, Mission Transition, and Camp Abilities. DVI coordinates these programs with community partners, such as Delaware State University, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP), local businesses, the University of

Delaware, etc. These programs incorporate the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC), transition activities and Pre-ETS – all critical for students with visual impairments. Additionally, students participate in career-focused activities such as the NASA Space Camp for Students with Visual Impairments in Huntsville, AL, Envision Level Up provided by Wichita State University in Wichita, KS, and several transition programs offered by the Carroll Center for the Blind in Boston, MA.

To further educate the community and transition stakeholders about agency services, DVI participates in several statewide transition activities along with other core partners. The Education Administrator, designated TVIs, VR Transition Counselors and the VR District Administrator participate in monthly Transition Cadre meetings, hosted by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), and attended by Delaware’s General VR agency (DVR), LEAs, Charter schools, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), other state agencies and families. DVI is also involved in a statewide initiative, PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities, a pilot program developed to use data to build structured programming and interagency teams to facilitate authentic inclusion of students, including those with the most significant disabilities, in career and technical education (CTE) career pathways and work-based learning experiences while in high school. DVI will continue to work with DOE, DVR, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) to provide financial support and accessible materials for the annual Delaware Transition Conference.

DVI plans to increase opportunities for students to participate in transition activities by:

1. DVI will continue to partner with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in support of students interested in participating in Project SEARCH (PS) program. DVI will ensure students with visual impairments as candidates for the program to ensure they are properly supported.
2. DVI will continue to partner with organizations to access pre-ETS services. Community Integrated Services and ServiceSource provide community-based programming related to Work-based Learning Experiences and Workplace Readiness Training. Learning Ally provides college students with visual impairments support during their first and sometimes second year of higher education. All organizations are engaged with DVI regularly to provide continuous improvement and respond to the needs of students and ServiceSource represents CRPs on the DVI SRC.
3. The programs coordinated by DVI are separate and tend to have a specific focus (i.e., career prep, college prep, ILS skills, educational sports, etc.). The programs also occur in the summer to accommodate the availability of students. DVI will continue to develop programs that are weekend or week-long transition events that feature experts in the field of visual impairments as guest speakers or program hosts.
4. DVI VR Counselors will continue to provide input into the IEP goals when invited. Counselors will use the IEP with students to assist in developing the individualized plan(s) for employment (IPE).

j. 2. Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:

The existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), all Local Education Agencies (LEA), and DVI outlines roles and responsibilities of the LEAs and DVI about the consultation and technical assistance provided for the transition of students with visual impairments from school to post-school activities, including VR services. The MOU was fully executed by August 9, 2016, and is currently being updated and revised by all parties. Additionally, DVI is working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, and the Department of Education to develop a MOU that outlines roles and responsibilities of all four entities. The MOU was an action item from a legislative taskforce convened to assist with planning for the elimination of subminimum wages due to newly enacted legislation. The goal is to use the MOU to close infrastructure gaps in services.

The current MOU between DVI and DDOE defines VR eligibility, transition services, and pre-ETS activities.

In the MOU, DVI responsibilities include:

1. conduct training activities with appropriate staff members concerning the MOU and its implementation.
2. coordinate training with DDOE and LEAs regarding specific procedures to be followed by DVI, DDOE and LEAs related to coordination of educational programs, placement, and appointment of educational surrogate parents for children and youth with visual impairments who are receiving cooperative services from those agencies.
3. provide visual impairment (VI) education and transition related consultant services to LEAs that employ a TVI or related staff providing VI support (consultant services such as programming, in-service training, ordering of equipment, program evaluation, and coordination of inclusive placements in the least restrictive environment).
4. provide in-house training for DVI education staff on best practices, at least annually.
5. provide information as requested to school personnel on access to “long term support” necessary to assist individuals to live independently in the community.
6. DVI’s VR team participates in statewide transition activities with DOE and school personnel to allow for the exchange of information related to pre-ETS activities, VR services and to continue collaboration with LEAs on a statewide level.

k. Coordination with Employers

DVI-VR Business Services Structure

The Delaware business community plays a crucial role in the workforce system and the vocational success of DVI consumers. As such, it is critical for DVI to continually develop, cultivate and support employers throughout the state. Like our WIOA partners, DVI has embraced the dual-customer model and continues to build capacities of the Employment Service Specialists (ESS) who are tasked with employer outreach and engagement, as well as technical assistance to VR counselors and consumers. The ESS positions exist to assist the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) in obtaining employment for job seekers by building relationships with corporations that result in jobs and related opportunities.

DVI has two ESS positions who are directly supervised and supported by the VR District Administrator who is responsible for VR daily operations and staff supervision. An additional ESS position has been dedicated to the coordination of pre-ETS activities (Pre-ETS Coordinator) and services. The entire VR program, including career services and the Business Enterprise Program is overseen by a Social Services Senior Administrator who is responsible for the VR program administrative duties such as: supervising and supporting the VR District Administrator; establishing and maintaining quality assurance and performance measures, ensuring VR regulations are met, submitting required federal performance reports, updating policies and procedures, reviewing personnel training records, and providing technical assistance to VR staff. The established structure allows for statewide oversight, information sharing and a collaborative approach to employer engagement.

DVI-VR Business Services Activities

The DVI ESS team will continue to be responsible for the following efforts:

- Assist VR counselors by obtaining meaningful employment for job seekers.
- Develop work-based learning experiences (including internships, short-term employment, apprenticeships, and fellowships), and opportunities for pre-employment transition services.
- Join and actively network with professional organizations and groups such as the Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- Recruit and prepare consumers with responding to employer recruiting needs.
- Assist employers with their workforce needs through engagement and collaboration.
- Provide site surveys and solutions to help businesses identify reasonable accommodations, physical barriers, and safety needs.
- Coordinate blindness sensitivity training for business and their employees.
- Help advance the hiring of people with visual impairments in State government through the Agency Aide and Selective Placement program.
- Collaborate with schools, CRPs, and community organizations by engaging in events designed to enhance workforce development (job fairs, transition conference/events, etc.)
- Promote awareness of blindness related obstacles to continued employment.

Supporting consumers requires the ESS to help job seekers develop resumes, prepare for interviews, complete applications, and connect with employers. Their goal is to offer a delicate balance of guidance and assistance designed to teach functional job search skills, foster independence, provide comprehensive support (as dictated by need), and obtain meaningful employment. Currently, the ESS provides direct support in the workplace and/or discreetly assists the consumer to self-advocate as they work through the process of securing workplace accommodations.

The DVI ESS team is responsible for promoting and marketing the employment of persons who are blind by using multiple outlets and techniques to reach employers. In addition to developing new business, ESS personnel are tasked with cultivating new opportunities from existing business partnerships. As business relationships are formed and nurtured, the ESS acts as a resource, offering a variety of services designed to minimize common workplace barriers to companies who wish to increase recruitment efforts or better support employees with severe visual impairments. In addition to acting as a conduit connecting job seekers with employers, the ESS provides consultative advice, technical assistance, linkages to community resources, or any other means by which to assist the company.

The DVI ESS team will continue to provide consultation, technical assistance, and support to employers on workplace accommodations, assistive technology, and facilities and workplace access through collaboration with community partners and employers, across States and nationally, to enable the employers to recruit, job match, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or who are applicants for such services. DVI will continue to assist employers with utilizing available financial support for hiring or accommodating individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to, a renewed agreement with the Division of Employment and Training regarding utilization of the Work Opportunities Tax Credit for individuals with visual impairments. DVI will continue to develop relationships with employers to craft customized supported employment opportunities in integrated settings that is consistent with the individual's unique skills, abilities, interests, and informed choice.

The VR team will continue to provide the following services and coordination:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) and Employment Services Specialists (ESS) will continue to enhance communication and collaboration with all DVI programs, community partners and business partners to provide more work-based learning and work-based readiness services for students. Some of the services provided to prepare students for competitive integrated employment will be soft skills, internships, interviewing skills, networking skills, resume building, technology training and job shadowing.
- The ESS team created a Business Partners tracking database in 2021. The database continues to evolve and assists the ESS team to better meet the needs of business partners by tracking services used or needed to onboard new employees with visual impairments.

It is also be used to track technical assistance to business partners, number of consumers hired and location of placements (county, city, etc.). The intention is for the team to use the database to demonstrate successful outcomes, develop work-based learning, and initiate paid and unpaid internships that allow students to explore different careers as well as to identify opportunities for job development and promote workplace inclusion. ESS will continue to coordinate development efforts, contact new businesses, and increase networking through business-oriented organizations such as, Society of Human Resource Managers, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, WIOA partners, state and local boards, and economic development offices. Collaborating with WIOA and economic development partners to leverage business contacts, share resources and expertise, and coordinate services that are beneficial to businesses and promote inclusive employment opportunities for individuals with visual impairments.

- The ESS team will continue to improve efforts to cultivate new opportunities from existing business partnerships. Using facilitated planning targeting DVI and Business partner inputs, the ESS will identify opportunities to create more work-based learning experiences (including paid internships, short-term employment, apprenticeships, and job shadowing); developing new pre-employment transition strategies; and supporting businesses with recruiting qualified applicants with visual impairments. These efforts will provide increased probabilities for successful outcomes.
- ESS team will support employer engagement by providing businesses access to all DVI services. The VR Program will continue to regularly updates marketing materials and training for consumers and businesses. Workplace inclusion services, such as vision-specific on-site training; Americans with Disability Act worksite training; information and resources related to federal contracting and Section 503; assistance with identifying workplace accommodations; access to the latest assistive technology; and workplace accessibility and access for the blind. DVI ESS will also provide technical assistance to businesses with the necessary paperwork to access hiring incentives (i.e., Federal tax credits, Delaware Disability Employment tax credit, and on-the-job training wages.
- The ESS team will serve as points of contact for businesses needing guidance regarding support to remove disability-related obstacles to employment and the provision of reasonable accommodations for work-based learning experiences, onboarding, and retention of employees, including Assistive Technology and worksite assessments.

Labor Market Information

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics current population study, the Delaware unemployment rate November 2023 was 4.2%. The rate remained unchanged for several months after a slight increase in October 2023. The state unemployment rate continues to be higher than the national rate (3.7%) and of two of three contiguous states, two of which are below the national average (MD 1.8%, PA 3.4%, NJ 4.7%). Although unemployment is slightly higher than the national average, DE continues to improvement as recovery from the public health emergency continues. According to the Delaware Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information, the unemployment rate from November 2022 was .5% higher than November 2023.

DVI also reviewed the current labor market to identify gaps and opportunities related to jobs for people who are blind. According to the National Federation of the Blind, more than 70% of people with severe vision loss are not working full time and 27.7% live with income below poverty level.

Unwinding from the public health emergency has created a significant change in the local labor market. Two years ago, Delaware saw a sharp decrease in leisure & hospitality, retail, and manufacturing, and saw growth in transportation & warehousing. But by the end of 2023, the State saw strong growth in leisure and hospitality with an increase of 4.3%, government at 2.3% higher than last year, and private education and health had the third highest growth at 1.9%. Overall, DE had a 1.9% increase in nonfarm jobs between November 2022 and 2023, exceeding the national growth of 1.8%.

Looking Ahead

According to the Delaware Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information, the fastest growing occupations over the next six years will be animal care and service workers (38.06%), personal care workers (29.95%), home health aides (29.92%), healthcare support occupations (28.13%) food preparation and serving (27.41%). Additionally, occupations related to those above such as supervisors and/or support, are also expected to see significant growth. Industries projected to see significant growth and add the most jobs include Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation (37.66%), Social Assistance (34.89%), Arts and Entertainment (29.69%), Food Service and Drinking Places (25.51%), Leisure and Hospitality (25.42%), Accommodation and Food Service (24.47%), Education and Health Services (13.80%), and Healthcare (21.27%). There are some key takeaways to consider when planning for the next four years including:

- The rise in remote work will increase the need for technology and training
- Baby boomer generation are retiring at a rapid rate, taking years of knowledge with them but opening doors for restructuring of jobs.
- People with bachelor's degrees are still twice as likely to be employed as those without.

Strategies for 2024-2027:

- Increase training and education for youth and adults.
- Identify high demand career opportunities both locally and nationally.
- Develop small business engagements target chambers of commerce, Small Business Association, and increase use of the American Job Center resources.
- Work with CRPs to identify social service positions needed.
- Target remote and part time positions to enhance both employer and job seeker flexibility.
- Outreach, outreach, outreach – there is a greater need to educate employers (especially small business) about the benefits of hiring DVI consumers.

- Engage job seekers and employers with regular job fairs, meet & greets, mentoring, paid internships, job shadowing (take advantage of successfully closed consumers as networkers and mentors).

DVI-VR Business Services Transition Activities

DVI will reestablish the coordination of summer youth program and utilize relationships with the City of Wilmington, New Castle County and employers in Kent and Sussex Counties to provide opportunities. Before the public health emergency, each site reserved several positions specifically for students with visual impairments. This opportunity resulted in businesses being more informed and better prepared to understand the abilities and potential accommodation needs of individuals with visual impairments and provided students access to work experiences that align with their skills and abilities.

DVI will continue to utilize existing CRP that offer group and individualized pre-ETS transition services, including workplace readiness training and work-based learning experiences and work to establish additional partnerships. The CRP staff can provide individualized pre-ETS activities as well as work in collaboration with DVI on the various group programs offered to students during school breaks. Through the engagement of their employer partners, the CRPs have created opportunities for students to job shadow, participate in informational interviews and worksite tours and gain work experience through paid or unpaid internships.

DVI will continue to be a core partner in the PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities program. This program works closely with LEAs, state agencies and Career and Technical Education (CTE) to identify opportunities to promote and support the inclusion of students with disabilities in CTE career pathways. Delaware DOE has made a great effort to assist LEAs with aligning their CTE offerings with the high growth fields in Delaware, specifically to the labor market needs in the various regions the LEAs are located. A major component of this program is ensuring all students have access to work-based learning experiences that are incorporated into the CTE pathways, utilizing an existing partnership with employers who provide the work and training opportunities. DVI will continue to participate in Cadre meetings to help identify gaps in educational pathways, develop best practices for skills needed after school to enter the workforce and to help educational staff with identified barriers to employment.

The DVI ESS team will provide consultation, technical assistance, and support to employers on workplace accommodations, assistive technology, and facilities and workplace access through collaboration with community partners and employers, across States and nationally, to enable the employers to recruit, job match, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or who are applicants for such services. DVI will assist employers with utilizing available financial support for hiring and providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to, a renewed agreement with the Division of Employment and Training regarding utilization of the Work

Opportunities Tax Credit for individuals with visual impairments. The Division for the Visually Impaired will continue to develop relationships with employers to craft customized supported employment opportunities in integrated settings that is consistent with the individual's unique skills, abilities, interests, and informed choice.

I. Interagency Cooperation with Other Agencies

I. 1. State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

DVI partners with the Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) which is provided through the University of Delaware Center for Disability Studies. With locations in all Delaware counties, the ATRC has a vast inventory of equipment, software, communication devices and items that support people with all disabilities. As required by the Assistive Technology Act, DVI maintains representation on the Assistive Technology Loan Advisory Board. In addition to the ATRC, DVI operates statewide assistive technology training centers which are state-funded and dedicated solely to the needs of school-aged students who are blind or severely visually impaired and is an active member of the State Council for Persons with Disabilities Statewide Electronics Accessibility Committee.

The ATRC and DVI offer rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for consumers across all stages of the VR process, one-to-one demonstrations and device borrowing program. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices that supplement and enhance individual functions, such as job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment for individuals with visual impairments.

I. 2. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

According to the Delaware Occupational and Labor Market statistics, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting jobs will decrease by 4.17% by the year 2030⁴. However, when consumers wish to pursue careers in the industry, DVI utilizes the following resources to assist with career readiness and employment development:

1. Delaware Department of Agriculture training and certification programs to assist consumers interested in Grain Inspection, Nutrient Management, Pesticide Applicators, and Farm Food Safety.
2. AgrAbility Program Resources: Although Delaware is no longer an active State participant in the AgrAbility program through the United States Department of Agriculture, DVI has access several resources available to all states. For example, the National AgrAbility Project provides certain information and services remotely, such as recommendations on types of

⁴ [Long-Term Industry \(delaware.gov\)](https://delaware.gov/long-term-industry)

technologies or advice about navigating the social services system. Additional resources include an assistive technology toolbox, publications, and archived webinars.

I. 3. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;

DVI maintains and continues to establish relationships with workforce development agencies to utilize the out-of-school programs that would benefit job seekers. DVI is an active member of the WIOA partner leadership team and participates in ongoing initiatives for quick navigation through services and data sharing. DVI provides vocational services to out-of-school youth with visual impairments in collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs through cooperative relationships. Additional partners include: DE Department of Labor General Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment & Training, Unemployment Insurance, DE Health & Social Services, Division of Social Services, Division of State Service Centers, Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities, Office of Financial Empowerment (Stand by Me Financial Coaching), Department of State, Division of Libraries, DE Division of Social Services, DE State Housing Authority, Ticket to Work - Full Circle Benefits Counseling, Office of Economic Development, Community Rehabilitation Service Providers.

I. 4. State use contracting programs;

State use contracting in Delaware falls under the purview of the Commission for Statewide Contracts to Support Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (the Commission). The Commission codified by DE Code 16 § 9600 is designed to encourage and assist individuals with visual impairments and other disabilities to achieve maximum personal independence by assuring an expanded and constant market for their products and services. They routinely work together to develop new set-aside opportunities and ensure existing contracts are operating within the established guidelines and regulations. DVI is appointed to the Commission as an Ex-Officio member and as such, is actively engaged in the state use set-aside process.

To operate the set-aside contracts effectively and fairly, the Commission utilizes one or more Central Nonprofit Agency (CNA) as primary contractors of set-aside opportunities. Using the state procurement process, a CNA Request for Proposal is published on a quarterly basis to attract multiple types of contractors. Once contracts are secure, the CNA has the option of subcontracting or performing the job themselves. Regardless of the choice, the CNA is responsible for ensuring the contracts maintain the proper ratios of employees with and without disabilities and provide the goods/services as described in the contract.

There is currently one CNA in Delaware, the Ability Network of Delaware (A.N.D.), who subcontracts the work to several community rehabilitation providers. The set-aside opportunities in Delaware are temporary staffing and janitorial. The DVI Vocational Rehabilitation unit works collaboratively with the A.N.D. and their subcontractors to help consumers secure positions, evaluate assistive technology needs, and offer other services to ensure success on the job.

DE Code 16 § 9606 defines Business Enterprise Program (BEP) priority to vending contracts in State buildings. The DVI Director is a non-voting member of the Commission. This provides a chance to gain input from stakeholders and aids in the ongoing preservation and development of State opportunities prioritized for BEP.

I. 5. State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

DVI has active relationships with state agencies that access employment services through Medicaid resources under Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

DVI collaborates with the Division for Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) while providing Supported Employment (SE) services to consumers with visual impairments and intellectual disabilities. Eligible individuals may receive extended employment services made possible through amendments of the DDDS Home and Community Based Waiver programs, HCBS 1915(i), HCBS 1915(c) and HCBS (b)(4).

DVI partners with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) to coordinate the provision of evidence-based SE to eligible visually impaired consumers who have severe and persistent mental health needs. Employment services are made possible through Section 1115 of the Medicaid demonstration waiver as authorized by Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

I. 6. State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;

In Delaware, people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, who meet the eligibility, have access to comprehensive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS). DVI collaborates with DDDS for the provision of SE services to consumers with blindness and intellectual disabilities. If eligible, individuals may receive extended services from DDDS through one of three Medicaid HCBS waivers. Each waiver has defined criteria for eligibility, the services available are very similar. They include employment navigation, career exploration and assessment, individual & small group SE, Social Security benefits counseling, financial coaching, non-medical transportation, personal care (including a self-directed component), orientation & mobility, and assistive technology. The waiver is intended to complement VR services by offering extended services, personal care and customized services for people who may have had unsuccessful employment experiences. To avoid gaps in services, interagency coordination begins before the consumer completes the SE process with DVI. Once DVI makes a referral, DDDS does an individualized review of eligibility, application status (if applicable), and existing resources. The goal is to have a streamlined process that assists in identifying all available programs and resources, expand and improve employment services to people with significant disabilities, and maximize the use of comparable benefits.

DVI and DDDS are both housed under the Department of Health and Social Services and members of the Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC), the governing body for ensuring people with disabilities are provided the opportunity to enter jobs and develop careers.

I. 7. State agency responsible for providing mental health services; and

DVI and the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) collaborate to provide Evidence-based Supported Employment (SE) to eligible visually impaired consumers who have severe and persistent mental health needs. The DSAMH PROMISE program uses a team approach to integrate employment support services and comprehensive mental health services. Eligible participants receive career exploration, on-the-job supports, transportation, personal care, orientation and mobility training, assistive technology, and other services to help them gain and maintain employment. The waiver is intended to complement VR services by offering extended services, personal care, and customized services for people who may have had unsuccessful employment experiences. Like DVI, DSAMH is also situated under the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) which provides DVI with quick access to Division leadership if needed to resolve consumer issues.

I. 8. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system.

DVI collaborates with a variety of public and private agencies and programs that are not performing activities through the statewide workforce development system to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired and solutions to employment barriers. While DVI is committed to working collaboratively with its WIOA partners, it recognizes the importance of maintaining other strong partnerships to provide exceptional customer service to businesses and individuals with disabilities. Cooperation with private and non-profit service agencies, related government agencies, and other professional organizations has long been a cornerstone of public VR services for the blind in Delaware. Such collaborations help to overcome the complex and multiple barriers that confront people with disabilities who want to work or stay independent in their communities.

DVI maintains strong relationships with public institutions of higher education including Delaware State University and the University of Delaware. DVI is actively involved in, or has ongoing relationships with, several councils whose missions are related to individuals with disabilities including the Employment First Oversight Commission and the State Council for Persons with Disabilities.

DVI has established partnerships to ensure the following services are available to consumers: government employment/internship opportunities; pre-employment transition service opportunities; daily living (home energy, housing, child care, etc.) assistance; financial coaching; peer counseling; access to Medicaid for supported employment transitions; public access & accessibility (streets, buses, etc.); accessible materials creation; access to vision related medical

community; higher education; access to books and periodicals in multiple formats; and braille enrichment.

Partner agencies include: DE Division of Developmental Disabilities; DE Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance; DE Division of Public Health; DE Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health; DE Department of Transportation; DE Department of Human Resources; DE Department of Corrections; DE Department of Services for Children, Youth and Families; New Castle County Government; City of Wilmington Government; BlindSight Delaware; Library of Congress; National Federation of the Blind; Delaware Association of Optometry; DE School for the Deaf; University of Delaware; Delaware State University; Delaware Technical & Community College; Wilmington University; Ability Network of Delaware (formerly the Delaware Association of Rehabilitation Facilities) and Community Rehabilitation Providers.

I. 9. Other private nonprofit organizations.

Delaware is a small state with a close-knit community of private nonprofit VR service providers who generally serve two designated state agencies (Blind & General). Historically, DVI provided most services using internal staff and referred a very small number of participants to CRPs. DVI understood the importance of offering choice and using providers who specialize in placement services, so an initiative was launched to utilize the services of providers and to build more relationships. This initiative began in FY20 and has resulted in partnerships with two local CRPs who provide all vocational services and one CRP who specializes in adjustment to blindness and peer support services. This partnership has resulted in 75% increase in the use of vendors for all community-based services including assessments, job placement, job coaching, supported employment, and Pre-Employment Transition services as well as services for comprehensive benefits counseling and entrepreneur preparation and training. Additionally, DVI VR counselors routinely review training opportunities with consumers. These options include the programs supported by the DE workforce development system and innovative online training designed specifically for job seekers who are blind or visually impaired.

DVI continues to search for partnerships and contracts with providers that specialize in, or aspire to specialize in, services designed for people who are blind and utilizes organizations located outside of Delaware to secure highly specialized services specific to visual impairments.

Regardless of the method by which cooperative agreements are formed, DVI offers service providers on-site training to introduce techniques and strategies to support people who are blind. Vendors are provided training sessions related to blind sensitivity, blind etiquette, assistive technology, and more. During the sessions, DVI professionals ask attendees to wear blindfolds and/or goggles that depict various types of vision loss, while they perform tasks such as pouring a drink and icing a cupcake. The attendees are also provided with Sighted Guide instruction and experience using a white cane. Since launching the training, DVI has conducted six sessions for over fifty CRP staff. The DVI staff also provide guidance to providers by evaluating common barriers faced by blind consumers and recommending solutions. Examples

of recommendations include updated assistive technology (software, screen readers, etc.) as well as low tech tools (bump dots, large-face devices, etc.).

When seeking partner organizations, DVI adheres to the State procurement process, shares solicitations through the State bid portal, and gains approval from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services as required. The procurement process is outlined in the newly revised grants manual which includes policies, procedures, and internal controls.

Assurances

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

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).

The State Plan must include
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State:
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) Certifications

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

Delaware Department of Health and Social Services

2. Enter the name of designated State agency (3-6 are written requirements and can be found in portal)

Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

7. Enter the name of authorized representative below

Deborah Talley, Director Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

8. Enter the title of authorized representative below

Director, Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

Certification Signature

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Deborah Talley
Title of Signatory	Division Director
Date	

Performance Indicators - DRAFT

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	49.0%		48.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.0%		48.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4000.0		4100.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	29.0%		30.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	47.0%		48.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Vocational Rehabilitation

1. Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) strives to ensure General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) regulations compliance by ensuring all citizens have equitable access to, and participation in federally funded Vocational Rehabilitation programming by working to overcome barriers based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, veteran status, residency or any other legally protected category. The mission of DVI is to provide educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.

DVI ensures consumers and employees have equal access to programs and/or employment through the following:

1. Adherence to relevant Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DSU) and the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) policies regarding equity in access and participation such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and the Technology Accessibility Policy.
2. In accordance with 34 CFR §361.37 (information and referral programs) and §361.41 (processing referrals and applications), DVI processes all referrals and requests for information in an equitable and timely manner.
3. Use of a variety of marketing and communication strategies to ensure all information is digitally accessible and available in multiple medias and languages.

4. Program and employee applicants may receive auxiliary aids and services to access VR program as defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) "auxiliary aids and services" in 28 CFR §35.104.
5. Ensure all VR staff are well-trained and understand the importance of the recently revised and updated VR policy and procedures manual. The policies promote equity through well-defined standardized access to all visually eligible persons interested in the program and funded activities.
6. Ensure hiring practices are fair and equitable by using an objective and standardized process for selecting qualified VR counselors, employment services specialists, trainers, and support staff.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Delaware has three counties with three different dynamics ranging from urban to suburban, small town, rural, and coastal. As such, Delaware experiences both statewide and localized barriers that could impede equitable access and participation if not addressed.

Statewide:

Lack of awareness of blindness and severe vision loss:

- a. Little public knowledge of blind and visually impaired etiquette (i.e., Sighted Guide, guide dogs, etc.)
- b. Limited understanding of when/how to offer a person who is blind assistance
- c. Lack of local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) that specialize in VR services to people with severe visual impairments and blindness.
- d. Knowledge gaps in developing and sharing documents or messages using accessibility basics.

Kent and Sussex Counties:

Inconsistent availability of internet connectivity and which results in limited access to assistive technology and resources.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To address the lack of awareness of blindness and severe vision loss, DVI plans to expand training topics and modernize content to be offered to a wider audience statewide. In addition to DVI employees, businesses, and family members, DVI will offer training to community rehabilitation providers that want to specialize in VI services, police departments, police cadet academy, first responders, schools, community groups, doctor offices, senior centers, WIOA core partners, and other state agencies. DVI will provide training and education, to address

barriers that may impede equitable access and participation to federally funded programs. Training sessions will continue to be interactive, conducted by vision professionals, and customizable from the list below.

- a. Sensitivity
- b. Sighted guide
- c. Disability etiquette
- d. Common visual impairments (VI) that affect the aging eye and eye diseases
- e. VI simulation
- f. White cane safety
- g. Basic communication and document accessibility (Office 365, Google docs, email, social media)

To increase access to the internet, DVI will work with the Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI) as Bipartisan infrastructure Law - Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) project is implemented. BEAD is dedicated for broadband expansion and may be used to connect unserved homes and upgrade connection.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Increase training to improve awareness of blindness and severe vision loss:

- a. October 2024 – Develop training curriculum.
- b. October 2024 – Add initiative to outreach plan.
- c. October 2024 – September 2026 – Conducted at least 15 training sessions.

Improve internet access

- a. 2024 Inform DVI consumers about the initiative and encourage them to self-advocate by reporting broadband access barriers. Provide assistance and support through the self-reporting process.
- b. 2024-2028 Participate in the state BEAD planning and implementation to advocate for the blind and visually impaired community.

GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Supported Employment

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) strives to ensure General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) regulations compliance by ensuring all citizens have equitable access to, and participation in federally funded Vocational Rehabilitation programming by working to overcome barriers based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age,

disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, veteran status, residency or any other legally protected category. The mission of DVI is to provide educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.

DVI ensures consumers and employees have equal access to programs and/or employment through the following:

1. Adherence to relevant Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DSU) and the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) policies regarding equity in access and participation such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and the Technology Accessibility Policy.
2. In accordance with 34 CFR §361.37 (information and referral programs) and §361.41 (processing referrals and applications), DVI processes all referrals and requests for information in an equitable and timely manner.
3. Use of a variety of marketing and communication strategies to ensure all information is digitally accessible and available in multiple medias and languages.
4. Program and employee applicants may receive auxiliary aids and services to access VR program as defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) "auxiliary aids and services" in 28 CFR §35.104.
5. Ensure all VR staff are well-trained and understand the importance of the recently revised and updated VR policy and procedures manual. The policies promote equity through well-defined standardized access to all visually eligible persons interested in the program and funded activities.
6. Ensure hiring practices are fair and equitable by using an objective and standardized process for selecting qualified VR counselors, business consultants, trainers, and support staff.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Delaware has three counties with three different dynamics ranging from urban to suburban, small town, rural, and coastal. As such, Delaware experiences both statewide and localized barriers that could impede equitable access and participation if not addressed.

Statewide:

Lack of awareness of blindness and severe vision loss:

- a. Little public knowledge of blind and visually impaired etiquette (i.e., Sighted Guide, guide dogs, etc.)
- b. Limited understanding of when/how to offer a person who is blind assistance
- c. Lack of local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) that specialize in providing VR services to people with severe visual impairments and blindness.

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- c. Disability etiquette
- d. Common visual impairments (VI) that affect the aging eye
- e. VI simulation
- f. White cane safety
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Improve internet access

WIOA Combined State Plan
Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)
Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired
January 2024

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- b. 2024-2028 Participate in the state BEAD planning and implementation to advocate for the blind and visually impaired community.