



# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT **UNIFIED PLAN**



STATE OF FLORIDA  
PROGRAM YEARS 2017-2020





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FIGURE INDEX .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACRONYM GUIDE .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT STATE PLAN TYPE.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
(a) <b>Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis .....</b>	<b>3</b>
(b) <b>State Strategic Vision and Goals.....</b>	<b>49</b>
(c) <b>State Strategy .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS.....</b>	<b>58</b>
(a) <b>State Strategy Implementation.....</b>	<b>58</b>
(b) <b>State Operating Systems and Policies .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>V. COMMON ASSURANCES.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS– ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>103</b>
(a) <b>General Requirements .....</b>	<b>103</b>
(b) <b>Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements .....</b>	<b>107</b>
(c) <b>Youth Program Requirements.....</b>	<b>110</b>
(d) <b>Single-area State Requirements.....</b>	<b>112</b>
(e) <b>Waiver Requests (optional) .....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>TITLE I-B ASSURANCES .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS–WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>115</b>
(a) <b>Employment Service Professional Staff Development .....</b>	<b>115</b>
(b) <b>Assistance in Unemployment Compensation Claims Through One-Stop Career Centers.....</b>	<b>116</b>
(c) <b>Assistance to UI Claimants and Other Unemployed Individuals.....</b>	<b>116</b>
(d) <b>W-P Funds to Support UI Claimants .....</b>	<b>118</b>
(e) <b>Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) .....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>VIII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS– ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS .....</b>	<b>130</b>
(a) <b>Aligning of Content Standards .....</b>	<b>130</b>
(b) <b>Local Activities .....</b>	<b>131</b>
(c) <b>Corrections Education and Other Education of Institutionalized Individuals.....</b>	<b>135</b>
(d) <b>Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program .....</b>	<b>135</b>
(e) <b>State Leadership.....</b>	<b>136</b>
(f) <b>Assessing Quality .....</b>	<b>138</b>



<b>IX. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS–VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION.....</b>	<b>142</b>
(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council.....	142
(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness.....	150
(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System .....	151
(d) Coordination with Education Officials.....	154
(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations.....	160
(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services .....	161
(g) Coordination with Employers .....	164
(h) Interagency Cooperation.....	166
(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.....	167
(j) Statewide Assessment.....	175
(k) Annual Estimates.....	177
(l) State Goals and Priorities.....	178
(m) Order of Selection .....	181
(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds.....	184
(o) State's Strategies.....	186
(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress .....	192
(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services .....	204
<b>VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS &amp; ASSURANCES.....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING.....</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>X. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS–FLORIDA DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES.....</b>	<b>214</b>
(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council.....	214
(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness.....	217
(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System .....	218
(d) Coordination with Education Officials.....	219
(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations.....	221
(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services .....	221
(g) Coordination with Employers .....	222
(h) Interagency Cooperation.....	223
(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.....	228
(j) Statewide Assessment.....	238
(k) Annual Estimates.....	244
(l) State Goals and Priorities.....	245
(m) Order of Selection .....	249
(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds.....	249
(o) State's Strategies.....	251
(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress .....	253
(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services .....	268
<b>VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS &amp; ASSURANCES.....</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING.....</b>	<b>276</b>



## FIGURE INDEX

### Section II

**Figure 2.01** Nonagricultural Employment in Florida, Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.02** Top 15 Existing Demand Occupations

**Figure 2.03** Top Emerging Industries

**Figure 2.04** Top 15 Emerging Occupations

**Figure 2.05** New and Emerging Occupations Top Knowledge Scores

**Figure 2.06** New and Emerging Occupations Top Skills Scores

**Figure 2.07** New and Emerging Occupations Top Abilities Scores

**Figure 2.08** Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Knowledge Scores

**Figure 2.09** Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Skills Scores

**Figure 2.10** Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Abilities Scores

**Figure 2.11** Rapid Growth Occupations Top Knowledge Scores

**Figure 2.12** Rapid Growth Occupations Top Skills Scores

**Figure 2.13** Rapid Growth Occupations Top Abilities Scores

**Figure 2.14** Florida Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)

**Figure 2.15** Florida's Labor Force and Employment (Seasonally Adjusted)

**Figure 2.16** Employment Status – U.S. versus Florida September 2015

**Figure 2.17** Percent Distribution of Employment by Major Occupational Group Florida 2015

**Figure 2.18** Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group Local Workforce Development Areas 1-7

**Figure 2.19** Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group Local Workforce Development Areas 8-16

**Figure 2.20** Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group Local Workforce Development Areas 17-24

**Figure 2.21** Fastest Growing Occupations in Florida

**Figure 2.22** Occupations Gaining the Most New Jobs in Florida

**Figure 2.23** Florida Construction Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.24** Florida Manufacturing Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.25** Florida Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.26** Florida Information Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.27** Florida Financial Activities Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.28** Florida Professional and Business Services Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.29** Florida Education and Health Services Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.30** Florida Leisure and Hospitality Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.31** Florida Other Services Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.32** Florida Government Employment Seasonally Adjusted

**Figure 2.33** Florida Educational Attainment for the Civilian Labor Force Aged 25-64 (2013)

**Figure 2.34** Analysis of Age Range and Ability to Speak English

**Figure 2.35** Educational Attainment and Ability to Speak English



## FIGURE INDEX

(continued)

### Section III

**Figure 3.01** Career Source Florida Board Governance

**Figure 3.02** Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Organizational Chart

**Figure 3.03** Florida's Workforce System Organization

**Figure 3.04** Florida Department of Education Organizational Chart

**Figure 3.05** Florida Division of Career and Adult Education Organizational Chart

**Figure 3.06** Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Organizational Chart

**Figure 3.07** Florida Division of Blind Services Organizational Chart

**Figure 3.08** Florida Common Measures Goals PY 2014-2015

**Figure 3.9** 2014-2015 WIA Participants/Exiters

**Figure 3.10** State WIA Statewide Common Measures of Performance PY 2014-2015

**Figure 3.11** Local Workforce Development Board WIA Performance Program Year 2014-2015

**Figure 3.12** Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Performance Indicators and Targets

**Figure 3.13** Florida Adult Education State Performance Targets – Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education

**Figure 3.14** Florida Adult Education State Targets – Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education

**Figure 3.15** Distribution of Dislocated Worker Funding Percentages

### Section VI

**Figure 6.01** CareerSource Florida Network Map

### Section VII

**Figure 7.01** MSFW Significant/Bilingual Office Locations

### Section VIII

**Figure 8.01** Adult General Education Programs and Courses

### Section IX

**Figure 9.01** VR Personnel and Projected Staffing Needs

**Figure 9.02** Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

**Figure 9.03** Key Results of Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Survey

**Figure 9.04** CSNA Findings and Recommendations

**Figure 9.05** Projected Number of Eligible Individuals to Receive Vocational Rehabilitation Services

**Figure 9.06** Projected Outcome and Service Goals, and Time Frames for SFY 2017

**Figure 9.07** Federal Standards and Indicators

**Figure 9.08** Requests by Type and Federal Fiscal Year

### Section X

**Figure 10.01** Performance Standards and Indicators

**Figure 10.02** Personnel Employed by FDBS

**Figure 10.03** Counselor to Client Ratio

**Figure 10.04** Personnel Serving Vocational Rehabilitation Clients: Vacancy Information

**Figure 10.05** FDBS Personnel Standards by Position SFY 2014-2015

**Figure 10.06** Supported Employment Spending Patterns

**Figure 10.07** Individuals Served by Supported Employment Programs

**Figure 10.08** Outcomes in BBE Program

**Figure 10.09** Clients Served by Service Category

**Figure 10.10** Number of Clients Served in Race Ethnicity Categories

**Figure 10.11** Change in Number of Clients Served in Minority Groups

**Figure 10.12** FDBS Training Offered FFY 2014-2015

**Figure 10.13** FRCB Meeting Expenses



## ACRONYM GUIDE

---

<b>ABE</b>	Adult Basic Education
<b>AEPIP</b>	Adult Education Program Improvement Plan
<b>ASE</b>	Adult Secondary Education
<b>ACS</b>	American Community Survey
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>AOP</b>	Agricultural Outreach Plan
<b>APD</b>	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
<b>AWARE</b>	Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting
<b>BBE</b>	Bureau of Business Enterprise
<b>BEES</b>	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
<b>CBTAC</b>	Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant
<b>CCRS</b>	College & Career Readiness Standards
<b>CEU</b>	Continuing Education Units
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
<b>CSNA</b>	Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
<b>CRC</b>	Certified Rehabilitation Counselors
<b>CRP</b>	Community Rehabilitation Provider
<b>CASAS</b>	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System
<b>CSPD</b>	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
<b>DEO</b>	Department of Economic Opportunity
<b>DJJ</b>	Department of Juvenile Justice
<b>DPN</b>	Disability Program Navigator
<b>DROP</b>	Deferred Retirement Option Program
<b>DVOP</b>	Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
<b>DCAE</b>	Division of Career and Adult Education
<b>EFM</b>	Employ Florida Marketplace
<b>EN</b>	Employment Networks
<b>EPS</b>	Employment Placement Specialist
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>ETA</b>	Employment and Training Administration
<b>FAAST</b>	Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology
<b>FAPE</b>	Free and Appropriate Public Education
<b>FDBS</b>	Florida Division of Blind Services
<b>FDOE</b>	Florida Department of Education
<b>FETPIP</b>	Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program
<b>FICAPS</b>	Florida's Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System
<b>FILC</b>	Florida Independent Living Council



## ACRONYM GUIDE

(continued)

**FFY** Federal Fiscal Year  
**FRC** Florida Rehabilitation Council  
**FRCB** Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind  
**IEP** Individualized Education Plan  
**IPE** Individualized Plan for Employment  
**ITA** Individual Training Accounts  
**IWT** Incumbent Worker Training  
**JVA** Jobs for Veterans Act  
**JVSG** Jobs for Veterans State Grant  
**KSAs** Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities  
**LEA** Local Education Agency  
**LMS** Learning Management System  
**LWDA** Local Workforce Development Area  
**LWDB** Local Workforce Development Board  
**MDES** Mississippi Department of Employment Security  
**MIS** Management Information System  
**MSA** Metropolitan Statistical Area  
**MSFW** Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers  
**NCSRC** National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils  
**NEG** National Emergency Grant  
**NFJP** National Farmworker Jobs Program  
**NRS** National Reporting System  
**O\*Net** Occupational Information Network  
**OCR** Office of Civil Rights  
**OCTAE** Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (USDOE)  
**OJT** On-the-Job Training  
**OOS** Order of Selection  
**PY** Program Year  
**QRT** Quick Response Training/Florida Flex  
**RA** Reemployment Assistance  
**REACT** Reemployment and Emergency Assistance Coordination Team  
**RESEA** Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment  
**RFA** Request for Application  
**RFP** Request for Proposal  
**RIMS** Rehabilitation Information Management System  
**RSA** Rehabilitation Services Administration (USDOE)  
**SBE** Significant Barriers to Employment



## ACRONYM GUIDE

(continued)

<b>SE</b>	Supported Employment
<b>SFY</b>	State Fiscal Year
<b>SNAP</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
<b>SRC</b>	State Rehabilitation Council
<b>SSA</b>	Social Security Administration
<b>TAA</b>	Trade Adjustment Assistance
<b>TAACCT</b>	Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training
<b>TANF</b>	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
<b>TABE</b>	Test of Adult Basic Education
<b>TAP</b>	Talent Acquisition Portal
<b>TPCA</b>	Third Party Cooperative Arrangements
<b>TRADE</b>	Transforming Resources for Accelerated Degrees and Employment
<b>UCX</b>	Ex-Service Members
<b>UI</b>	Unemployment Insurance
<b>USDOE</b>	United States Department of Education
<b>USDOL</b>	United States Department of Labor
<b>VETS</b>	Veterans Employment and Training Service
<b>VR</b>	Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
<b>WIA</b>	Workforce Investment Act
<b>WIPA</b>	Work Incentives Planning and Assistance
<b>WIOA</b>	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
<b>WP</b>	Wagner-Peyser
<b>WPRS</b>	Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services
<b>WRIS</b>	Wage Record Information System



## INTRODUCTION

---

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provides direction, guidance and important updates for the workforce system in every state. The new law prioritizes a market-driven approach to talent development that will prepare individuals seeking employment for the jobs of today and of the future. Added emphasis is placed on the need for access to workforce services for all individuals. Regional alignment of markets and resources are facilitated and encouraged.

Florida was quick to embrace and explore opportunities presented under WIOA to improve outcomes, grow partnerships and enhance customer service. A task force of 20 state partners was convened at the direction of the Governor and state legislature in May 2015 to facilitate implementation. A robust series of meetings occurred over several months, and numerous individuals and entities representing business, education, workforce and economic development stakeholders provided input and information.

It is notable that many of the innovative workforce development programs and priorities Florida developed and implemented over the last several years align well with WIOA's key tenets. With the receding unemployment rate and increase in job opportunities, Florida's workforce investment system has built on momentum gained through expanded business engagement and improved alignment with regional economies and stakeholders. An already strong focus on performance was sharpened by increasing the emphasis on achievement of results for job seekers, workers looking to grow in their careers and businesses looking to hire and enhance competitiveness.

Florida's workforce system is well-positioned to embark on a new era of integrated and exceptional service to businesses and job seekers under WIOA guidance. Among its many other components, the inclusion statewide of core partners who directly serve Floridians with individual needs and a heightened effort to engage business at every level will continue to drive greater outcomes. Successful implementation of WIOA will translate to greater opportunities and prosperity for both individuals and businesses, benefiting families, communities and Florida's future.



## I. WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT STATE PLAN TYPE

---

Florida is submitting an initial Unified State Plan which includes the following required programs:

- Adult Program
- Dislocated Worker Program
- Youth Program
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program, including Blind Services Program

Unified planning was selected for the first plan submitted under WIOA. Steps will be taken to formalize a Combined Plan approach within the next four years, allowing Florida to be deliberate and thorough in its planning efforts across programs.



## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

---

### (a) **Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis**

#### (1) **Economic and Workforce Analysis**

##### (A) **Economic Analysis**

##### (i) **Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**

#### **Existing Demand Industry Sectors**

As of September 2015, industries with the most demand were all services-producing industries with trade, transportation and utilities generating the most demand (1,678,000 jobs), followed by education and health services (1,218,100 jobs), professional and business services (1,206,700 jobs) and leisure and hospitality (1,153,800 jobs). Construction (+6.6 percent) and leisure and hospitality (+5.3 percent) were the fastest growing major industries. As of September 2015, national annual growth rates (seasonally adjusted) in construction (+3.4 percent), manufacturing (+0.8 percent), trade, transportation and utilities (+2.0 percent), financial activities (+1.9 percent), education and health services (+2.8 percent), and leisure and hospitality (+3.0 percent) were less than the expansion rates for Florida. Florida (+3.0 percent) had the strongest over-the-year seasonally adjusted growth rate among the ten most populous states in September 2015, California was next at 2.8 percent and North Carolina ranked third (+2.6 percent). Among all states, Florida ranked fifth and California ranked sixth in seasonally adjusted annual growth rate.



**Figure 2.01**  
**Nonagricultural Employment in Florida, Seasonally Adjusted**

Industry Title	September 2015	August 2015	September 2014	Over the Month Change Level	Over the Month Change %	Over the Year Change Level	Over the Year Change %
Total Nonagricultural Employment	8,113,900	8,111,800	7,878,200	2,100	*	235,700	3.0
Total Private	7,040,900	7,032,200	6,806,500	8,700	0.1	234,400	3.4
Goods Producing	771,300	769,600	741,300	1,700	0.2	30,000	4.0
Construction	429,500	426,300	402,800	3,200	0.8	26,700	6.6
Manufacturing	336,300	337,800	332,800	-1,500	-0.4	3,500	1.1
Durable Goods	228,900	230,400	224,300	-1,500	-0.7	4,600	2.1
Nondurable Goods	107,400	107,400	108,500	0	0.0	-1,100	-1.0
Service Providing	7,342,600	7,342,200	7,136,900	400	*	205,700	2.9
Private Service Providing	6,269,600	6,262,600	6,065,200	7,000	0.1	204,400	3.4
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,678,000	1,677,200	1,633,500	800	*	44,500	2.7
Wholesale Trade	338,500	337,600	330,500	900	0.3	8,000	2.4
Retail Trade	1,073,400	1,075,100	1,048,000	-1,700	-0.2	25,400	2.4
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	266,100	264,500	255,000	1,600	0.6	11,100	4.4
Information	134,400	135,300	136,300	-900	-0.7	-1,900	-1.4
Financial Activities	539,800	536,300	524,800	3,500	0.7	15,000	2.9
Finance and Insurance	360,300	358,300	351,500	2,000	0.6	8,800	2.5
Real estate, Rental, and Leasing	179,500	178,000	173,300	1,500	0.8	6,200	3.6
Professional and Business Services	1,206,700	1,210,500	1,180,400	-3,800	-0.3	26,300	2.2
Professional and Technical Services	510,300	511,800	493,900	-1,500	-0.3	16,400	3.3
Management of Companies and Enterprises	98,900	98,500	94,500	400	0.4	4,400	4.7
Administrative and Waste Services	597,500	600,200	592,000	-2,700	-0.4	5,500	0.9
Education and Health Services	1,128,100	1,220,400	1,167,900	-2,300	-0.2	50,200	4.3
Educational Services	151,700	153,400	149,400	-1,700	-1.1	2,300	1.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,066,400	1,067,000	1,018,500	-600	-0.1	47,900	4.7
Leisure and Hospitality	1,153,800	1,146,600	1,095,700	7,200	0.6	58,100	5.3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	221,300	218,900	210,600	2,400	1.1	10,700	5.1
Accommodation and Food Services	932,500	927,700	885,100	4,800	0.5	47,400	5.4
Other Services	338,800	336,300	326,600	2,500	0.7	12,200	3.7
Total Government	1,073,000	1,079,600	1,071,700	-6,600	-0.6	1,300	0.1
Federal	134,100	134,300	132,100	-200	-0.1	2,000	1.5
State	209,100	211,200	206,900	-2,100	-1.0	2,200	1.1
Local	729,800	734,100	732,700	-4,300	-0.6	-2,900	-0.4

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, December 2015

**Existing Demand Occupations**

Existing demand occupations are occupations that have the highest number of projected total job openings. Total job openings reflect (1) job openings resulting from employment growth and (2) job openings resulting from replacement needs, which arise when workers retire or otherwise permanently leave an occupation. In most occupations, replacement needs provide many more job openings than employment growth does.

Existing demand occupations tend to be occupations that serve the most basic societal needs. The most common existing demand occupations in the U.S. labor market are low-skill, hourly wage occupations with high turnover. Florida follows the national pattern, with common existing demand occupations in the state, including retail salespersons, food preparation and serving workers, waiters and waitresses, and cashiers. However, some existing demand occupations in Florida are relatively high-skill. Such occupations include registered nurses, accountants and auditors, and elementary school teachers.

The top five existing demand occupations for Florida statewide are related to customer service and hospitality. Retail salespersons is the top existing demand occupation, with 142,563 projected total job openings between 2015 and 2023. Two of the top existing demand occupations are the healthcare occupations registered nurses and nursing assistants, which have a relatively high turnover rate and will continue to experience employment growth as a result of the increasing demand for healthcare services, driven by population growth and aging, expanding insurance coverage, and technological change. Only two of the top existing demand occupations require significant technical training: registered nurses and accountants and auditors.



The following table displays the top 15 existing demand occupations (based on 2015-2023 total job openings) for Florida statewide.

**Figure 2.02**  
**Top 15 Existing Demand Occupations**

Rank	Code	Occupation	2015 Employment	2023 Employment	2015-23 Level change	2015-23 Percent Change	2015-23 Total Job openings	2015 Median Hourly Wage	2015 Entry Wage	2015 Experienced Wage
1	412031	Retail Salespersons	344,846	391,259	46,413	13.5	142,563	10.18	8.383	13.34
2	353021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	231,200	271,131	39,931	17.3	115,048	9.05	8.79	9.74
3	353031	Waiters and Waitresses	210,126	231,053	20,927	10.0	103,363	9.15	8.79	11.84
4	412011	Cashiers	223,396	235,165	11,769	5.3	93,726	9.22	8.82	10.21
5	434051	Customer Service Representatives	219,039	249,981	30,942	14.1	78,200	13.77	10.08	17.06
6	291141	Registered Nurses	168,885	196,503	27,618	16.4	52,993	29.89	24.28	34.01
7	537062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	135,018	150,708	15,690	11.6	49,379	11.26	8.91	14.62
8	436014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	185,531	215,051	29,520	15.9	47,332	14.57	10.61	17.57
9	439061	Office Clerks, General	154,202	167,735	13,533	8.8	39,313	12.56	9.37	15.74
10	372011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	124,617	142,478	17,861	14.3	36,142	9.83	8.79	11.91
11	373011	Landscaping and Grounds keeping Workers	100,774	115,176	14,402	14.3	34,735	11.00	9.09	13.10
12	435081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	120,597	124,128	3,531	2.9	33,097	10.98	8.93	13.19
13	311014	Nursing Assistants	89,500	108,035	18,535	20.7	31,882	11.49	9.89	12.82
14	352014	Cooks, Restaurant	95,857	112,564	16,707	17.4	31,876	11.48	9.39	13.36
15	132011	Accountants and Auditors	82,405	94,055	11,650	14.1	31,055	29.72	20.82	39.68

Source: Department of Economic Opportunity, October 2015



## (ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

### Emerging Demand Industries

Most of the emerging industries were chosen from among the 4-digit North American Industry Classification System industries with the fastest projected growth rates over the next eight years. Several industries were excluded because they belong in the existing in-demand industry sectors list. Some additional industries were chosen because of a strong increase in employment since 2011. Health care, professional and personal services industries top the lists of emerging industries. Emerging industries tend to employ a higher percentage in professional occupations.

**Figure 2.03**  
**Top Emerging Industries**

Code	Title	2015 Employment	2023 Employment	2015 Total Change	2023 Percent Change
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	90,520	116,273	25,753	28.5
6213	Offices of other Health Practitioners	48,364	62,077	13,713	28.4
6117	Educational Support Services	5,278	6,731	1,453	27.5
8129	Other Personal Services	29,510	37,439	7,929	26.9
6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	13,279	16,690	3,411	25.7
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	51,241	63,885	12,611	24.7
6223	Private Specialty (Except Psychiatric and Substance Abuse)	13,618	16,694	3,076	22.6
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	75,200	92,080	16,880	22.4
6111	Private Elementary and Secondary Schools	60,190	73,489	13,299	22.1
6113	Private Universities	54,499	66,387	11,888	21.8
6215	Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories	20,363	24,625	4,262	20.9
6112	Private Junior Colleges	5,374	6,460	1,086	20.2
5191	Other Information Services	6,057	7,621	1,204	19.9
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	72,912	87,217	14,305	19.6
6114	Business Schools and Computer and Management Training	5,044	5,993	949	18.8
5417	Scientific Research and Development Services	16,845	19,930	3,085	18.3
5414	Specialized Design Services	8,715	10,225	1,510	17.3
5239	Other Financial Investment Activities	16,881	19,773	2,891	17.1
5112	Software Publishers	11,554	15,513	1,959	17.0
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	44,733	52,038	7,305	16.3
4889	Other Support Activities for Transport	1,851	2,131	280	15.1
4452	Specialty Food Stores	14,828	16,375	1,547	10.4

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Emerging Occupations**

Emerging occupations consist of (1) new occupations in the workforce and (2) traditional occupations whose requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities are currently evolving in response to altered market conditions, new technology, and societal changes.

Some of the factors that cause occupations to emerge are changing technology, laws, demographics, and business practices. In Florida, common emerging occupations include physician assistants, civil engineers, registered nurses, and geothermal technicians. The most common industry sectors for emerging occupations are healthcare and professional services, due to ongoing advances in medical technology; life, physical, and environmental sciences; engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences; and psychology and the social sciences. Since emerging occupations are often driven by technological innovation, they tend to be high-skill occupations that require postsecondary education.

The majority of top emerging occupations occur in the healthcare (seven of top 15) and professional services (five of top 15) industry sectors.

The growth in healthcare sector emerging occupations reflects an increasing demand for medical services as a result of population aging, expanding medical insurance coverage, and technological innovation.

There are several emerging specialties for physicians: hospitalists, who specialize in caring for patients throughout a hospital stay; nuclear medicine physicians, who use radiopharmaceuticals for diagnosis and therapy; and preventive medicine physicians, who develop ways to prevent disease and keep people from becoming ill or getting injured.

The professional services emerging occupations reflect an increasing demand for advanced engineering, quantitative, and computer software skills.

Energy-related sales representatives and geothermal technicians are two emerging occupations in the clean tech industry sector. Energy sales representatives buy or sell energy products on behalf of residential or commercial customers or utilities, and they negotiate and oversee contracts for energy sales. Geothermal technicians perform technical activities necessary for the generation of power from geothermal energy sources. In Florida, geothermal technicians are primarily involved with the installation, testing, and maintenance of residential and commercial geothermal heat pumps.

First-line supervisors of construction and extraction workers is prominent in the construction industry sector. The occupation is designated as emerging because construction supervisors increasingly work in the area of solar energy installation, which comprises the entire process of planning and coordinating the installation of photovoltaic solar and solar thermal systems.



The following table reflects occupations designated as “emerging” by O\*NET OnLine. The top 15 emerging occupations (based on 2015-2023 percent job growth) are displayed for Florida statewide.

**Figure 2.04**  
**Top 15 Emerging Occupations**

Rank	Code	Occupation	2015 Employment	2023 Employment	2015-23 Level change	2015-23 Percent Change	Industry Sector Linkage	2015 Median Hourly Wage	2015 Entry Wage	2015 Experienced Wage
1	291071	Physician Assistants	5,308	7,280	1,972	37.2	Healthcare	46.59	35.95	53.94
2	152041	Statistician	930	1,232	302	32.5	Professional Services	26.27	15.37	36.74
3	471011	First-Line Superv. Of Construction and Extraction Workers	41,563	52,868	11,305	27.2	Construction	26.46	18.59	32.75
4	131081	Logisticians	5,404	6,862	1,458	27.0	Professional Services	32.11	22.39	39.47
5	291122	Occupational Therapists	5,915	7,249	1,333	22.5	Healthcare	40.13	29.46	47.59
6	151121	Computer Systems Analysts	21,025	25,330	4,305	20.5	Professional Services	39.34	26.62	48.72
7	172051	Civil Engineers	13,483	16,150	2,667	19.8	Professional Services	39.15	27.07	48.96
8	291069	Hospitalists, Nuclear and Preventative Medicine Physicians	15,480	18,454	2,974	19.2	Healthcare	93.58	56.21	123.14
9	292099	Neurodiagnostic and Ophthalmic Technologists, Surgical Assistants	7,260	8,634	1,374	18.9	Healthcare	17.33	12.77	23.42
10	299099	Midwives	1,261	1,492	231	18.3	Healthcare	15.51	11.52	25.10
11	439111	Statistical Assistants	267	311	44	16.5	Professional Services	17.57	11.32	22.55
12	291141	Registered Nurses	168,885	196,503	27,618	16.4	Healthcare	29.89	24.28	34.01
13	413099	Sales Representatives, Energy Related	75,594	87,957	12,263	16.2	Clean Tech	23.45	13.99	35.02
14	193039	Clinical Neuropsychologists	2,224	2,581	357	16.1	Healthcare	40.68	24.28	52.56
15	499099	Geothermal Technicians	13,630	15,770	2,140	15.7	Clean Tech	15.81	11.01	19.13

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015



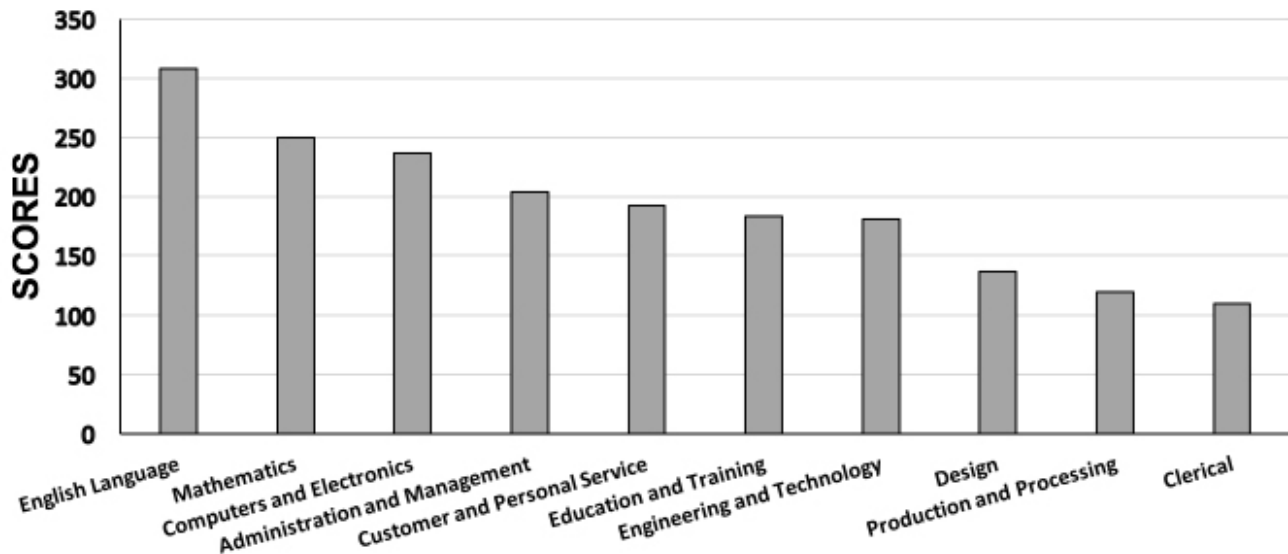
### (iii) Employers' Employment Needs

The needs of employers with respect to knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are provided for each occupation in the labor market by the O\*Net system <https://www.onetonline.org/>.

By using the content in the O\*Net database it is possible to analyze the knowledge, skills and abilities for individual occupations, occupational groups, or targeted occupations. The following is an analysis of occupations that are new and emerging, have rapid growth, and have numerous job openings. O\*Net importance scores for the various KSAs were matched to the relevant occupational groups. The following nine graphs show the KSAs for (1) new and emerging occupations, (2) occupations with numerous job openings and (3) rapid growth occupations as defined in the O\*Net system.

New and emerging occupations lean toward KSAs that rely on mathematical and computer knowledge, comprehension, listening, and thinking skills. The most important abilities emphasize comprehension, problem sensitivity, and reasoning.

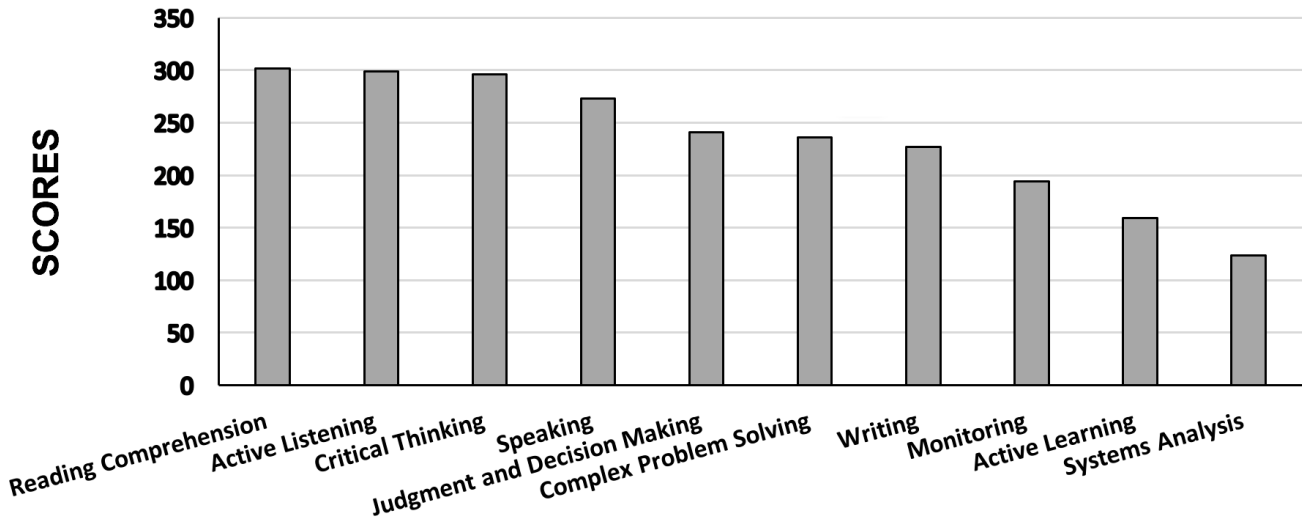
**Figure 2.05**  
**NEW AND EMERGING OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP KNOWLEDGE SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

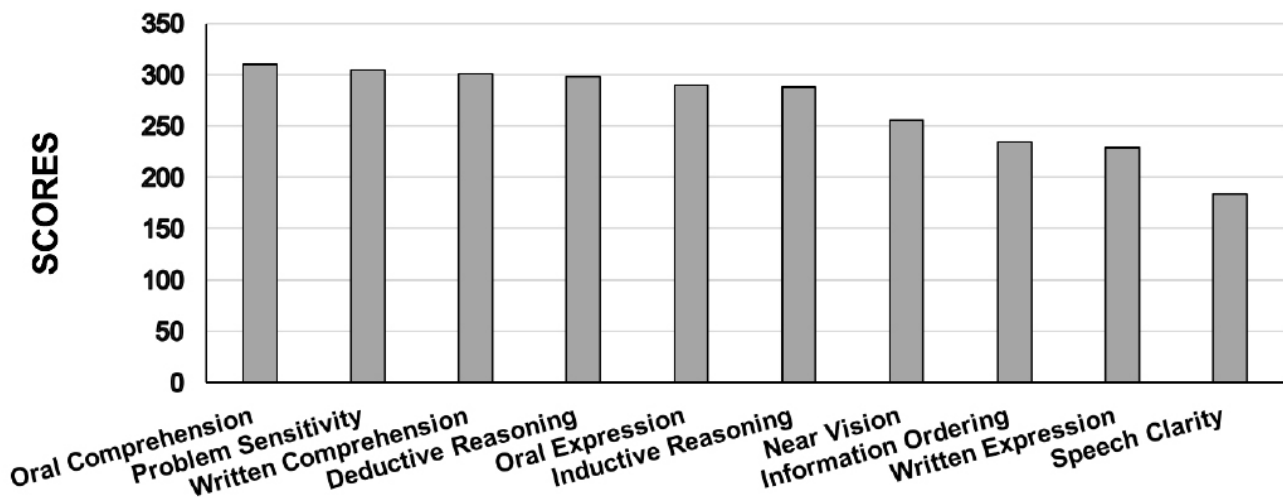


**Figure 2.06**  
**NEW AND EMERGING OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP SKILLS SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Figure 2.07**  
**NEW AND EMERGING OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP ABILITIES SCORES**

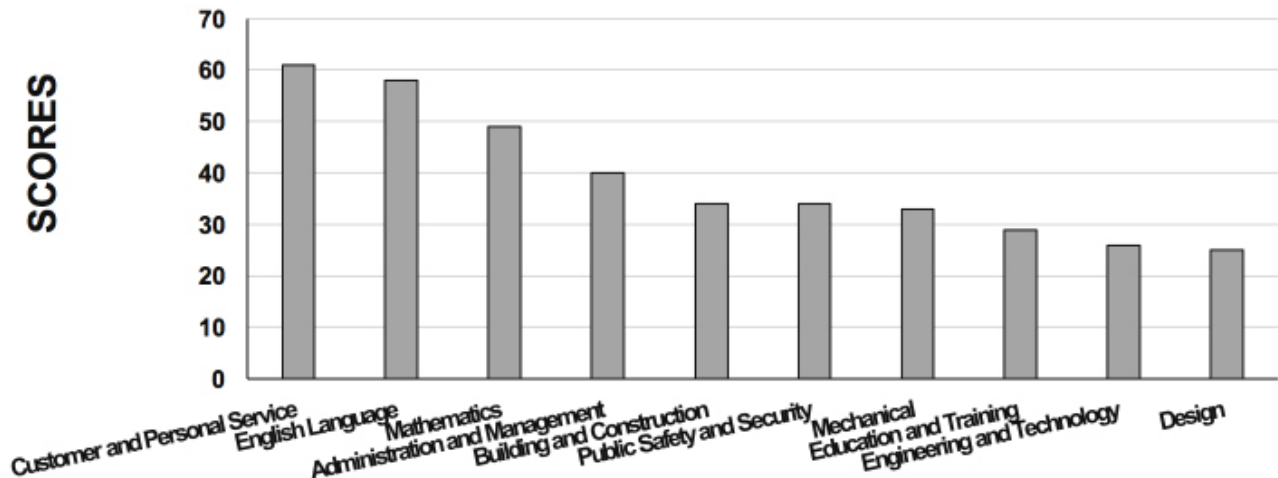


Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015



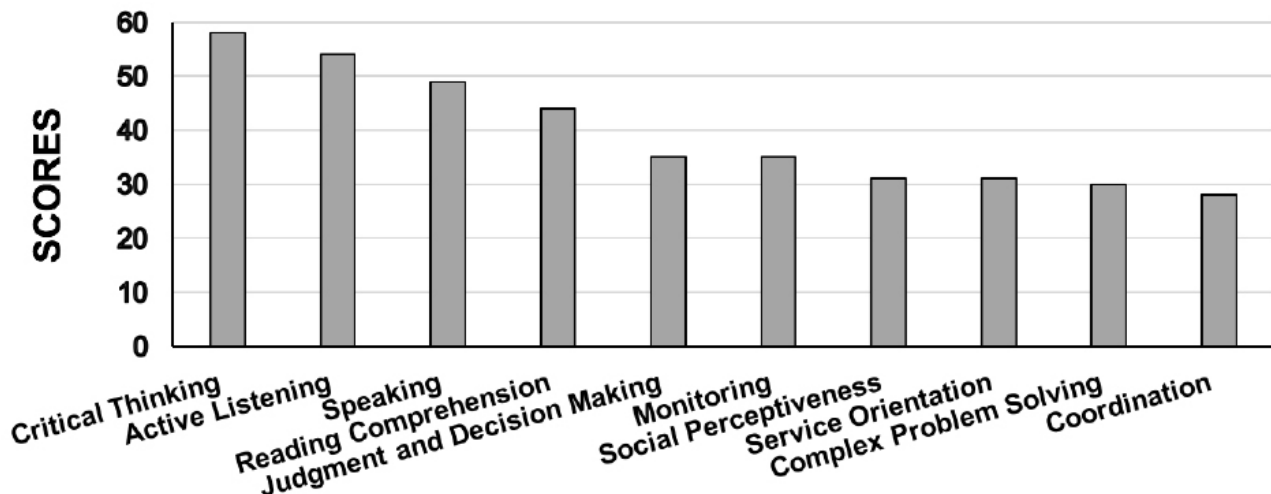
Occupations with the most job openings focus on customer service and English language knowledge along with mathematics, while the top skills are thinking, listening, and speaking. Top abilities scores are sensitivity to problems, near vision, along with comprehension and reasoning. There is less emphasis on higher-level KSAs compared to new and emerging occupations.

**Figure 2.08**  
**OCCUPATIONS WITH THE MOST JOB OPENINGS**  
**TOP KNOWLEDGE SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

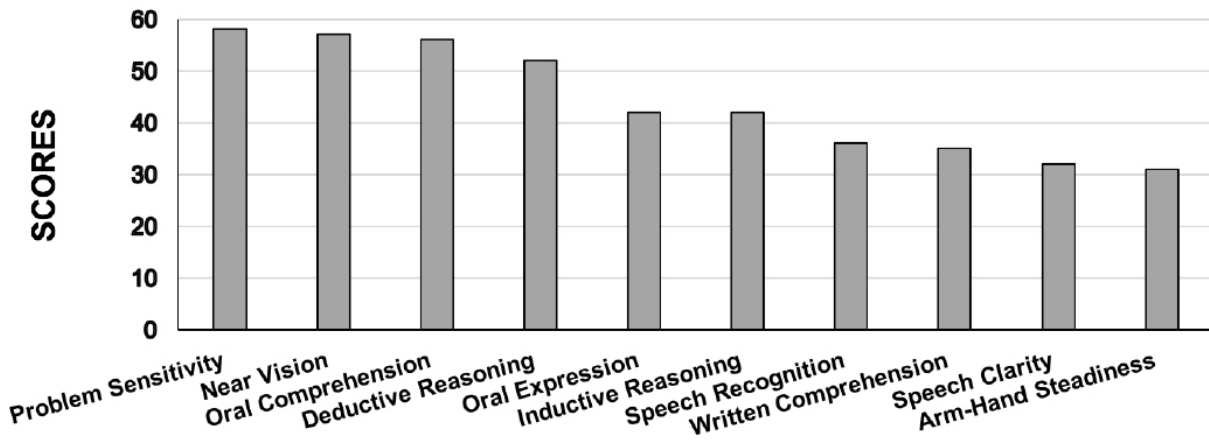
**Figure 2.09**  
**OCCUPATIONS WITH THE MOST JOB OPENINGS**  
**TOP SKILLS SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015



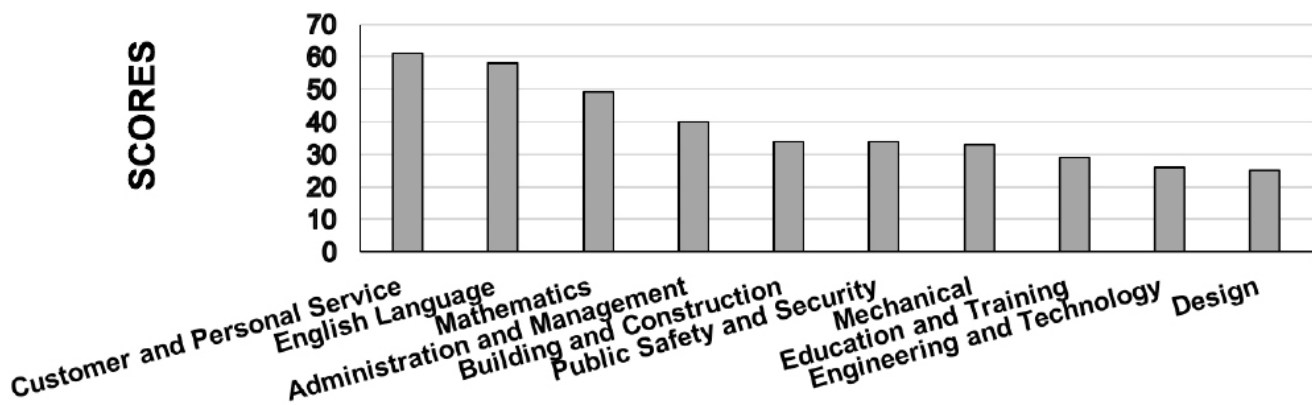
**Figure 2.10**  
**OCCUPATIONS WITH THE MOST JOB OPENINGS**  
**TOP ABILITIES SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

Occupations with rapid growth look much like occupations with numerous job openings as defined by O\*Net. Softer skills such as active listening and speaking are prevalent while abilities include sensitivity to problems, comprehension, and vision.

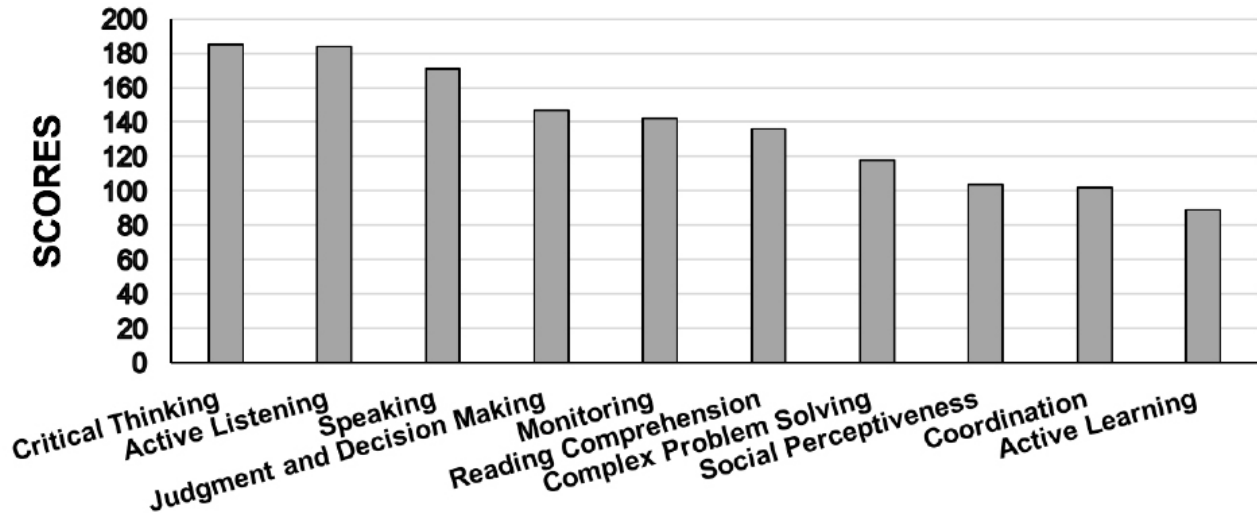
**Figure 2.11**  
**RAPID GROWTH OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP KNOWLEDGE SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

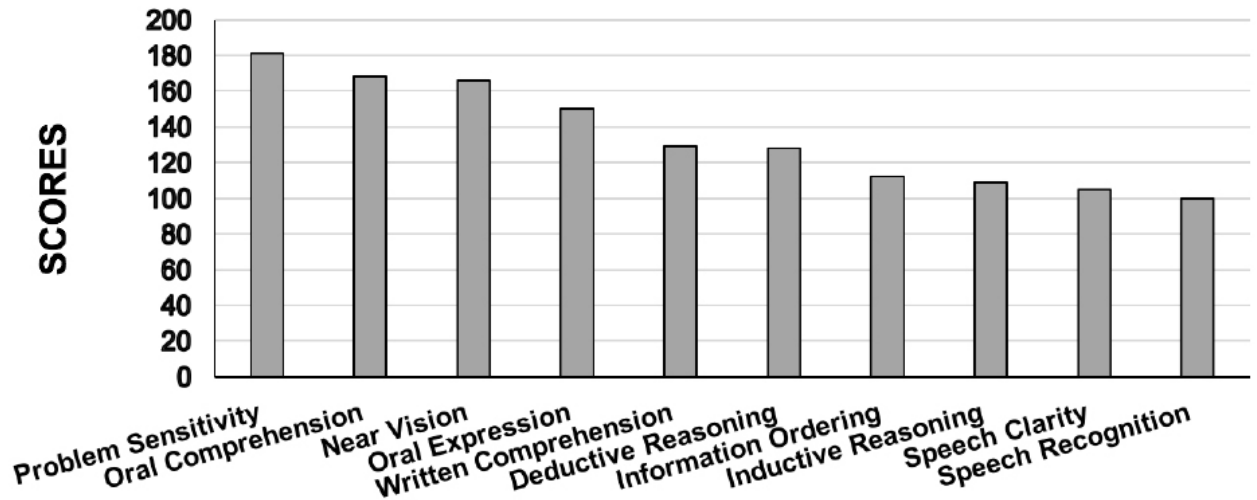


**Figure 2.12**  
**RAPID GROWTH OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP SKILLS SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Figure 2.13**  
**RAPID GROWTH OCCUPATIONS**  
**TOP ABILITIES SCORES**



Source: O\*Net and Florida Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**(B) Workforce Analysis****(i) Employment and Unemployment****Jobs**

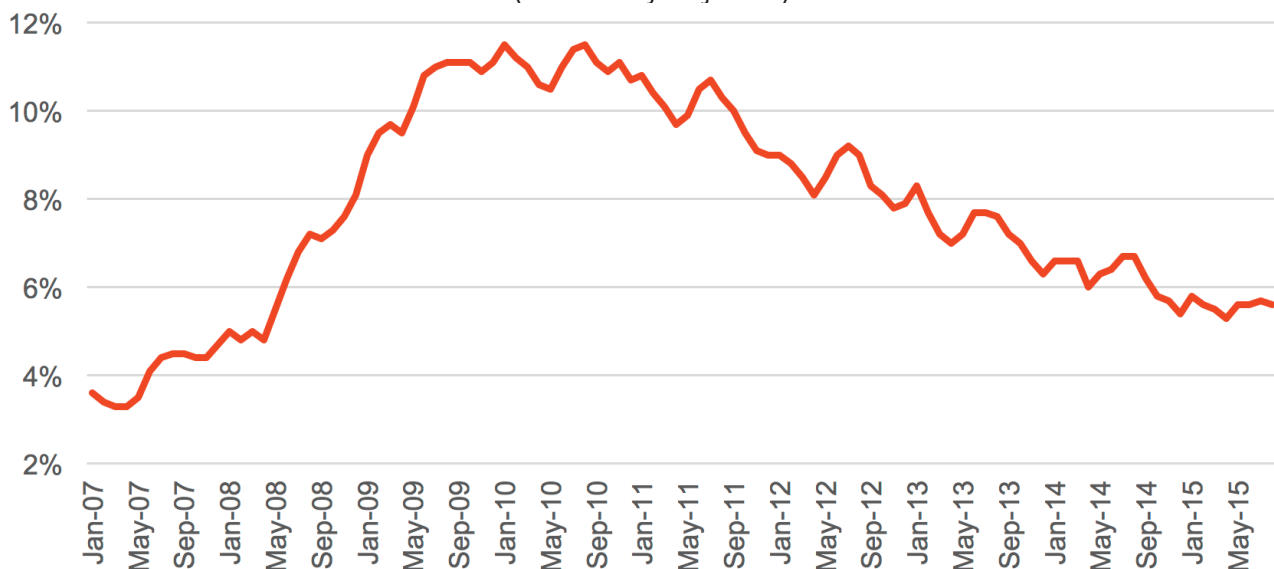
There are many positive indicators of Florida's recovery from the Great Recession. Payroll employment (jobs) has been expanding at a rate exceeding that of the nation since April 2012. Florida was adding jobs faster than the nation by 1.0 percentage point (3.0 percent Florida versus 2.0 percent nationally) as of September 2015. Florida has gained jobs over the month for 47 consecutive months and has gained jobs over the year for the past 62 months. Prior to this, the state had been losing jobs for more than three years. All of Florida's 23 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) had over-the-year job gains in September 2015. The Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA added the most jobs in September 2015 (+41,400) followed by the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA (+28,500).

**Labor Force and Unemployment**

Florida's unemployment rate has declined since the November 2009-January 2010 peak of 11.2 percent reached in the Great Recession. The number of unemployed persons peaked at 1,020,000 in January 2010 and has since dropped by 523,000 as of September 2015. The labor force has increased by 451,000 as of September 2015 from the low point reached in November 2009.

The unemployment rate for the state of Florida declined by 0.6 percentage points over the year to 5.2 percent in September 2015. This was the 62nd consecutive month of over-the-year declines in Florida's unemployment rate.

**Figure 2.14**  
**FLORIDA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

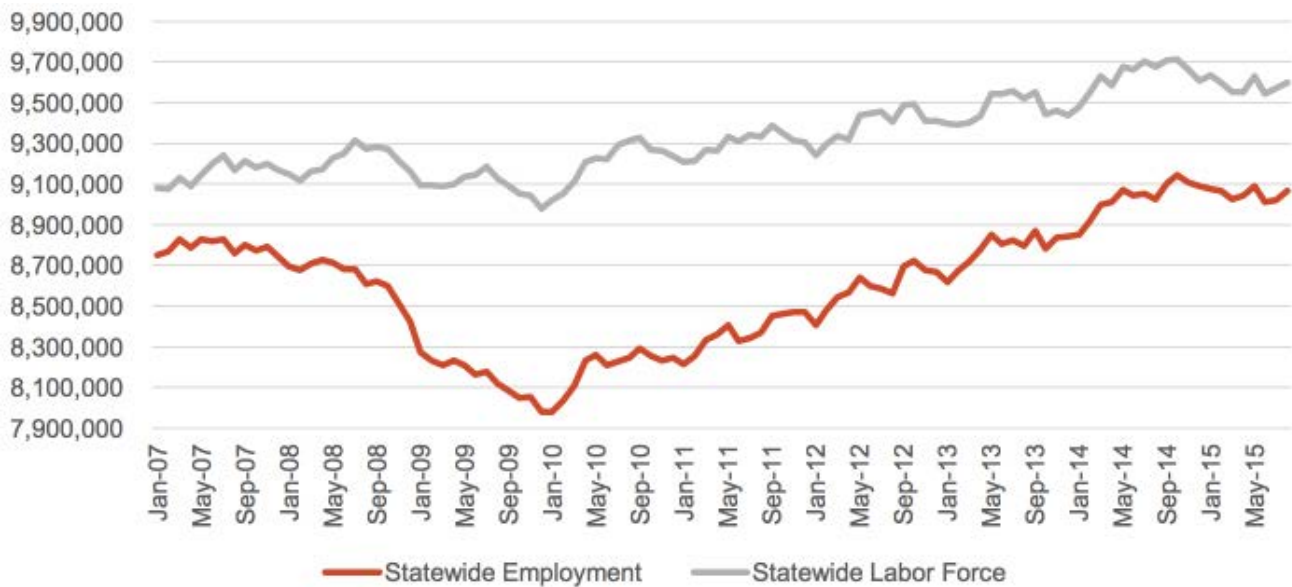


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015.



The labor force has been increasing in recent years, although it declined after reaching a peak in February 2015 and started increasing again in September 2015 (September 2015 labor force = 9,532,000). In addition, the number of unemployed persons has been declining since October 2010 (September 2015 unemployed persons = 497,000). The number of employed persons has been increasing since November 2009, although there was a decline in early 2015, which was followed by an increase in September 2015 (September 2015 employed persons was 9,035,000). The lower unemployment rates as of September 2015 have been in counties with large government employment sectors or stable tourism sectors (Monroe County at 3.6 percent, Franklin and Okaloosa Counties at 4.3 percent). Higher unemployment rates are found in counties with large agricultural sectors (Hendry County at 11.4 percent and Hardee County at 8.6 percent). County unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted.

**Figure 2.15**  
**FLORIDA'S LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT**  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015



Florida's unemployment rate was the same as the national rate in January 2008 (both at 5.0 percent seasonally adjusted), but Florida's rate began to exceed the national rate as the recession continued to develop. By January 2010, Florida's rate was 11.2 compared to 9.8 for the nation. The unemployment rates for Florida and the nation have been very close in the current stage of the recovery, although Florida has been slightly higher for the past nine months. Below are national and Florida statistics on full-term and part-time status of the employed. More residents are working full-time and fewer are working part-time for economic reasons.

**Figure 2.16**  
**EMPLOYMENT STATUS- U.S. VERSUS FLORIDA**  
**SEPTEMBER 2015**

Employment Status	National September 2015 (monthly)	National Over-the- Year Change (monthly)	Florida September 2015 (12-month moving average)	Florida Over-the- Year Change (12-month moving average)
Full-time	81.90%	0.50%	82.40%	-0.20%
Voluntary part-time	13.40%	0.10%	12.20%	0.70%
Part-time for economic reasons	4.10%	-0.70%	4.60%	-0.50%
Part-time but not at work	0.60%	0.20%	0.80%	0.00%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, October 2015

**Other positive economic indicators are:**

- Florida Reemployment Assistance initial claims decreased by 40.0 percent from the previous year and were 1.3 percent below the previous low of February 2006.
- Florida job postings compiled by the Help Wanted OnLine data series totaled 267,548 openings (seasonally adjusted) in September 2015. September job demand was up by 8,137 openings (+3.1 percent) over the year.
- Florida building permits for 1-unit structures were up 358 (+7.5 percent) compared to the same month a year ago in August 2015 (latest data available).
- Florida housing foreclosures were 5,544 in August 2015 (latest data available). Foreclosures were down 1,297 (-19.0 percent) over the year.
- Florida's median home price was up 11.1 percent over the year in August 2015 (latest data available).
- September 2015 sales tax collections were up 3.2 percent compared to a year ago. Sales tax collections have been above the previous peak (June 2006) since June 2014.
- The Florida Consumer Sentiment Index level was 87.9 in September 2015, up 5.1 points over the year.
- An estimated 25.8 million visitors came to Florida in the second quarter of 2015, an increase of 5.5 percent over the same period in 2014. A total of 98.8 million visitors came to Florida in 2014. This was an increase of 4.9 percent from 2013.
- Florida's real Gross Domestic Product in 2014 was up 2.7 percent from 2013.



In conclusion, Florida's recovery is strong. Most of the major industry sectors have returned to growth patterns in evidence before the recession, and many of these have higher rates of growth compared to the previous major expansion. While construction has not returned to the previous peak number of jobs, the current (September 2015) growth rates (+8.2 percent) are very healthy. There are no indicators of overbuilding or bubbles in the current housing market. Tourism looks healthy as reflected in the leisure and hospitality industry (+5.3 percent growth). Higher-paying industry sectors are experiencing healthy and sustainable expansion: financial activities (+2.9 percent), professional and business services (+4.7 percent), and education and health services (+4.3 percent).

The unemployment rate continues to decline. Employment as measured in the household survey continues to expand, and has exhibited a recent strengthening. Other indicators back up the overall conclusion about the strength and sustainability of the recovery over the near-term. Florida has a very healthy labor market as of September 2015, but this places challenges on Florida's workforce system on how to best mold and sustain this expansion and provide better economic opportunities for Florida's citizens.

### **Individuals with Barriers to Employment**

The majority of persons with a disability who reside in Florida are not in the labor force (684,895 not in labor force; 452,073 in labor force). The Florida unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 23.2 percent in 2013 compared to 11.8 percent for all labor force participants. The unemployment rate in this population increased by 1.2 percentage points from 2012 to 2013 (the most recent year for which data are available) while the overall unemployment increased 0.5 percentage point during that period. The majority of American Indians and Alaska Natives who reside in Florida are part of the labor force (2,097 in labor force; 1,339 not in labor force) and the Florida unemployment rate for such persons was 16.2 percent in 2013, an increase of 0.5 percentage point from 2012. The majority of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders who reside in Florida are part of the labor force (6,075 in labor force; 2,558 not in labor force) and the Florida unemployment rate for such persons was 13.6 percent in 2013, an increase of 0.1 percentage point from 2012. The majority of persons age 55 and older who reside in Florida are not in the labor force (3,829,098 not in labor force; 1,978,170 in labor force) and the Florida unemployment rate for such persons was 9.6 percent in 2013, an increase of 0.3 percentage point from 2012.

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2009-13 indicate that approximately 12.9 percent (2.4 million) of Florida's total population (18.8 million) has a disability. Of those, it is estimated that almost 2.3 million are of working age- age 16 and over, and an estimated 416,627 of working age Floridians with disabilities are employed.

During FFY (Federal Fiscal Year) 2014-15, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in partnership with the Florida Rehabilitation Council, conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) to identify factors that affect job seekers' with disabilities ability to get and keep jobs, and any barriers or limitations they may experience. The CSNA consisted of the following components: state demographic profiles, a statewide public survey, stakeholder interviews, and additional information from agency performance data, customer satisfaction surveys and public input. Findings and recommendations from the CSNA guided agency planning and development of the VR state plan portion for federal fiscal years 2017-20. VR will continue to use this information to guide statewide and agency planning, as well as future collaborations with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core programs and other stakeholders.



CSNA survey results indicated factors rated most important to job seekers with disabilities. Percent for Very Important Ratings are as follows:

- Type of job matches personal abilities: 82.88 percent
- Work location/ available transportation: 78.31 percent
- Work environment (culture): 72.67 percent
- Wages or salary: 63.96 percent

Highest rated services in the survey item addressing Importance of VR services to job seekers with disabilities (Percent out of total responses) included the following three services. These three services were also consistently rated highest across items polling *current need* and *future demand* for vocational rehabilitation services.

- Job Search, Job Placement or Job Coaching (e.g., help with resumes, interviews, job development, accommodations): 61.25 percent
- Training (e.g., college tuition, vocational, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, job readiness): 61.01 percent
- Supported Employment Services (e.g., job placement, job coaching, planning for extended supports): 51.36 percent



## (ii) Labor Market Trends

**Demand Occupations and Occupational Groups**

The three largest occupational groups in Florida are office and administrative support occupations, with 1,456,284 jobs (17.3 percent of total jobs) and sales and related (1,141,809 jobs, 13.6 percent) and food preparation and serving (864,043 jobs, 10.3 percent) occupations. The last two groups are important to Florida tourism. A total of 2,680,519 jobs are in the eleven occupation groups that contain occupations requiring higher levels of education and training. These eleven groups comprise 31.9 percent of Florida's occupational jobs mix.

**Figure 2.17**  
**Percent Distribution of Employment by Major Occupational Group**  
**Florida 2015**

Occupational Group Code	Occupational Group Name	Florida Employment	Percent
110000	Management	384,229	4.6%
130000	Business and Financial Operations	448,164	5.3%
150000	Computer and Mathematical	185,189	2.2%
170000	Architecture and Engineering	101,395	1.2%
190000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	42,614	0.5%
210000	Community and Social Service	113,314	1.3%
230000	Legal	95,941	1.1%
250000	Education, Training, and Library	436,843	5.2%
270000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	136,521	1.6%
290000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	502,980	6.0%
310000	Healthcare Support	233,329	2.8%
350000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	864,043	10.3%
370000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	370,570	4.4%
390000	Personal Care and Service	280,394	3.3%
410000	Sales and Related	1,141,809	13.6%
430000	Office and Administrative Support	1,456,284	17.3%
450000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	56,407	0.7%
470000	Construction and Extraction	382,449	4.6%
490000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	361,301	4.3%
510000	Production	308,450	3.7%
530000	Transportation and Material Moving	496,783	5.9%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, October 2015



Local area employment by major occupational group is displayed in the following tables. Variation results from the dissimilarity of economic focus and industry mix of Florida's geographic areas. For example, Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) 1 (Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties) has a higher share of employment in food preparation and serving occupations and office and administrative support than the state due to tourism and government-related industries, respectively. LWDA 2 (Okaloosa and Walton Counties), with its emphasis on defense research, has 2.8 percent of total jobs by occupation in computer and mathematical occupations, while LWDA 5 (Gadsden, Leon and Wakulla Counties), which contains several higher educational institutions and state government offices, has 4.0 percent of jobs in this occupational group.

The following tables also show the percent distribution of employment by major occupational group for all workforce local areas in Florida grouped by geography.

For a graphic depicting each LWDA, please refer to section VI(a)(1)(A).



**Figure 2.18**  
**Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group**  
**Local Workforce Development Areas 1-7**

Occupational Group SOC	Occupational Group Name	Florida	LWDA 1	LWDA 2	LWDA 3	LWDA 4	LWDA 5	LWDA 6	LWDA 7
110000	Management	4.6%	3.7%	4.0%	3.8%	3.6%	4.8%	5.7%	3.4%
130000	Business and Financial Operations	5.3%	5.0%	6.2%	3.2%	3.9%	10.8%	2.7%	3.6%
150000	Computer and Mathematical	2.2%	2.0%	2.8%	1.0%	1.1%	4.0%	0.5%	0.7%
170000	Architecture and Engineering	1.2%	1.2%	3.0%	1.4%	2.4%	1.1%	1.2%	1.0%
190000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	1.5%	0.5%	0.6%
210000	Community and Social Service	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%	3.4%	1.5%	2.0%	1.6%	2.6%
230000	Legal	1.1%	1.0%	0.6%	0.4%	0.7%	2.1%	0.5%	0.7%
250000	Education, Training, and Library	5.2%	7.8%	4.9%	9.0%	5.0%	9.3%	7.8%	8.4%
270000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1.6%	1.3%	1.3%	0.5%	0.7%	2.0%	0.6%	0.6%
290000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.0%	6.9%	4.5%	6.8%	5.6%	5.6%	4.3%	7.3%
310000	Healthcare Support	2.8%	3.4%	1.6%	4.1%	2.7%	2.2%	3.0%	3.3%
350000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	10.3%	11.2%	15.7%	9.7%	13.4%	8.8%	7.2%	8.8%
370000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	4.4%	3.7%	4.2%	2.7%	4.2%	3.9%	4.4%	3.7%
390000	Personal Care and Service	3.3%	3.0%	3.2%	3.8%	2.8%	2.5%	2.0%	2.0%
410000	Sales and Related	13.6%	12.6%	14.3%	11.0%	14.6%	10.6%	10.1%	10.2%
430000	Office and Administrative Support	17.3%	17.8%	14.3%	14.2%	16.2%	15.9%	15.0%	20.3%
450000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	2.0%	0.3%	0.7%	6.3%	2.3%
470000	Construction and Extraction	4.6%	4.7%	4.9%	6.2%	5.6%	3.3%	4.6%	3.6%
490000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4.3%	4.5%	4.8%	3.9%	5.6%	3.5%	5.0%	4.5%
510000	Production	3.7%	3.4%	3.3%	4.5%	4.6%	2.2%	8.3%	5.1%
530000	Transportation and Material Moving	5.9%	4.7%	4.2%	7.6%	4.7%	3.2%	8.6%	7.4%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, October 2015



LWDAs 8, 14 and especially 15 have a high percentage of jobs in more skilled occupational groups with business and financial occupations exceeding the state's share by more than one percent. Computer and mathematical and engineering jobs are prevalent in Local Area 13 (the Space Coast). LWDA 8 has a greater share of installation, production and installation occupations compared to the statewide shares. LWDA 9 (Alachua, Bradford) has the greatest share of education and training occupations of any local area.

**Figure 2.19**  
**Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group**  
**Local Workforce Development Areas 8-16**

Occupational Group SOC	Occupational Group Name	Florida	LWDA 8	LWDA 9	LWDA 10	LWDA 11	LWDA 12	LWDA 13	LWDA 14	LWDA 15	LWDA 16
110000	Management	4.6%	4.1%	3.7%	3.1%	3.5%	4.4%	3.9%	4.5%	5.5%	3.3%
130000	Business and Financial Operations	5.3%	6.6%	5.6%	2.9%	3.4%	5.1%	5.2%	6.3%	6.9%	3.5%
150000	Computer and Mathematical	2.2%	2.5%	2.2%	0.7%	1.1%	2.8%	3.6%	3.1%	3.4%	1.2%
170000	Architecture and Engineering	1.2%	1.5%	1.2%	1.0%	0.9%	1.2%	4.3%	1.3%	1.3%	0.8%
190000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	0.5%	0.5%	1.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%
210000	Community and Social Service	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.8%	1.5%	1.1%	1.6%	1.7%	1.3%	1.8%
230000	Legal	1.1%	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%	1.5%	0.7%
250000	Education, Training, and Library	5.2%	4.7%	13.5%	5.7%	5.1%	4.6%	5.0%	4.3%	5.4%	7.4%
270000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1.6%	1.3%	1.9%	1.0%	1.3%	2.5%	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%	1.0%
290000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.0%	6.1%	9.9%	7.9%	7.1%	4.7%	6.6%	6.8%	5.5%	7.9%
310000	Healthcare Support	2.8%	2.8%	3.4%	4.2%	3.7%	2.0%	3.4%	3.6%	2.3%	4.0%
350000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	10.3%	9.6%	8.8%	10.0%	12.3%	11.5%	10.7%	9.9%	8.2%	11.8%
370000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	4.4%	3.7%	4.7%	4.3%	5.6%	5.4%	3.9%	3.6%	3.2%	4.4%
390000	Personal Care and Service	3.3%	2.8%	2.8%	3.7%	3.6%	4.6%	3.1%	3.3%	2.9%	3.9%
410000	Sales and Related	13.6%	11.7%	9.8%	13.8%	14.1%	14.3%	12.4%	12.7%	13.0%	13.5%



Occupational Group SOC	Occupational Group Name	Florida	LWDA 8	LWDA 9	LWDA 10	LWDA 11	LWDA 12	LWDA 13	LWDA 14	LWDA 15	LWDA 16
430000	Office and Administrative Support	17.3%	18.4%	14.9%	16.4%	16.0%	16.7%	15.8%	17.8%	18.9%	15.3%
450000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.7%	0.2%	0.6%	1.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	0.4%
470000	Construction and Extraction	4.6%	4.7%	3.2%	5.6%	5.5%	4.6%	4.7%	3.8%	4.2%	5.7%
490000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4.3%	4.5%	3.5%	4.7%	4.4%	3.9%	4.5%	4.3%	4.2%	4.5%
510000	Production	3.7%	4.2%	2.7%	5.3%	5.5%	3.0%	4.5%	5.1%	3.4%	3.2%
530000	Transportation and Material Moving	5.9%	7.7%	4.2%	5.7%	3.9%	5.8%	4.1%	4.5%	5.9%	5.4%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, October 2015



LWDA 21 (Palm Beach County) has 12 of 22 major occupational groups exceed the state's share of jobs. The higher skills occupational groups of management, business and financial operations, and computer and mathematical all exceed the Florida percent distributions for the groups. LWDA 17 (Polk County) has a greater share in construction, installation, production and transportation occupations. Transportation and material moving occupations was much higher than the state (9.2 percent vs. 5.9 percent), reflecting the local Area's significance in moving the state's products to local and local markets.

**Figure 2.20**  
**Percent Distribution by Major Occupational Group**  
**Local Workforce Development Areas 17-24**

Occupational Group SOC	Occupational Group Name	Florida	LWDA 17	LWDA 18	LWDA 19	LWDA 20	LWDA 21	LWDA 22	LWDA 23	LWDA 24
110000	Management	4.6%	4.0%	5.1%	7.5%	4.1%	5.0%	4.5%	4.9%	5.3%
130000	Business and Financial Operations	5.3%	3.8%	4.1%	2.5%	3.6%	5.6%	5.2%	5.6%	3.6%
150000	Computer and Mathematical	2.2%	1.5%	1.3%	0.8%	0.9%	2.3%	2.2%	1.7%	1.0%
170000	Architecture and Engineering	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%	0.7%	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%
190000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
210000	Community and Social Service	1.3%	1.1%	1.5%	2.3%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%
230000	Legal	1.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	0.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%	0.7%
250000	Education, Training, and Library	5.2%	5.5%	4.0%	6.1%	5.1%	4.3%	5.0%	5.0%	4.2%
270000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1.6%	1.4%	1.9%	0.6%	1.1%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%
290000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.0%	5.6%	6.2%	5.5%	6.5%	6.0%	5.8%	6.0%	6.0%
310000	Healthcare Support	2.8%	2.8%	3.5%	4.0%	3.3%	3.2%	2.6%	2.4%	3.0%
350000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	10.3%	8.4%	10.9%	8.8%	10.6%	10.9%	9.5%	9.6%	12.2%
370000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	4.4%	3.8%	4.9%	4.8%	6.2%	5.3%	3.9%	3.8%	6.1%
390000	Personal Care and Service	3.3%	2.5%	3.2%	2.8%	4.3%	3.2%	3.1%	3.4%	3.0%
410000	Sales and Related	13.6%	13.9%	13.4%	10.7%	13.4%	13.9%	15.3%	14.5%	14.4%



Occupational Group SOC	Occupational Group Name	Florida	LWDA 17	LWDA 18	LWDA 19	LWDA 20	LWDA 21	LWDA 22	LWDA 23	LWDA 24
430000	Office and Administrative Support	17.3%	17.0%	16.1%	16.9%	15.7%	71.2%	18.7%	18.7%	15.0%
450000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.7%	1.0%	1.2%	7.1%	1.5%	0.9%	0.1%	0.6%	1.8%
470000	Construction and Extraction	4.6%	4.6%	6.5%	4.0%	5.8%	4.3%	4.1%	3.3%	7.3%
490000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4.3%	5.2%	4.6%	3.6%	4.8%	4.5%	4.3%	3.9%	4.8%
510000	Production	3.7%	6.4%	4.6%	3.5%	4.2%	3.0%	3.5%	3.6%	2.8%
530000	Transportation and Material Moving	5.9%	9.2%	4.7%	6.9%	5.2%	4.3%	6.9%	7.5%	5.0%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, October 2015



The top occupations in the state's labor market can be represented in different ways. Below are two tables, the first showing percent change over the timeframe of the latest occupational projections (2015-2023) and the second showing the level of change (also 2015-2023). Seven of the top 20 occupations ranked by percent change are in the health practitioner or healthcare support major occupational groups. The medical secretaries occupation is in the top 20 list along with health specialties teachers. The fastest-growing occupation is diagnostic medical sonographers (4,878 jobs in 2015, +38.9 percent growth). Several construction occupations are prevalent in the top 20 list and cement masons is the top growth occupation from the construction major occupational group (12,577 jobs, +37.0 percent growth). The carpenters occupation is the largest on the top 20 list with 59,653 jobs in 2015.

The occupations gaining the most new jobs represent a mix of occupations needed by tourism-related industries along with healthcare and construction occupations. Both registered nurses (27,618 new jobs) and nursing assistants (18,535 new jobs) are in the top 20 list. Combined food workers (39,931 new jobs), waiters and waitresses (20,927) and restaurant cooks (16,707) occur in tourism-related industries. Many of the top occupations with the most new jobs are used by many different industries. These include secretaries (29,520 new jobs) and janitors (17,861). Elementary school teachers were also in the top 20 list with 13,509 new jobs. The table for occupations gaining the most new jobs also contains total job openings, which reflect openings generated by workers changing occupations or leaving the labor force (replacement openings) as well as openings resulting from economic growth.



**Figure 2.21**  
**Fastest Growing Occupations Florida**

Rank	Code	Occupation	2015 Employment	2023 Employment	2015-23 Level Change	2015-23 Percent Growth	Total Job Openings
1	292032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	4,878	6,776	1,898	38.9	2,420
2	291071	Physician Assistants	5,308	7,280	1,972	37.2	2,704
3	472051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	12,577	17,234	4,567	37.0	5,828
4	251071	Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	11,549	15,561	4,012	34.7	5,374
5	473013	Helpers-Electricians	6,080	8,064	1,984	32.6	2,791
6	311011	Home Health Aides	30,388	40,093	9,705	31.9	14,237
7	312021	Physical Therapist Assistants	4,850	6,392	1,542	31.8	2,380
8	291171	Nurse Practitioners	7,199	9,421	2,222	30.9	3,304
9	131051	Cost Estimators	14,630	19,051	4,421	30.2	8,124
10	131121	Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	5,819	7,510	1,691	29.1	2,313
11	131161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	19,897	25,465	5,568	28.0	7,693
12	136013	Medical Secretaries	18,715	23,835	5,120	27.4	6,917
13	471011	First-Line Superv. Of Construction and Extraction Workers	41,563	52,868	11,305	27.2	14,964
14	131081	Logisticians	5,404	6,862	1,458	27.0	1,929
15	499062	Medical Equipment Repairers	5,061	6,403	1,342	26.5	2,466
16	472141	Painters, Construction, and Maintenance	27,905	35,169	7,264	26.0	10,649
17	472081	Drywall and ceiling Tile Installers	6,555	8,251	1,696	25.9	2,204
18	319092	Medical Assistants	42,409	53,251	10,842	25.6	17,162
19	291123	Physical Therapists	12,151	15,251	3,100	25.5	5,476
20	472031	Carpenters	59,653	74,802	15,149	25.4	21,052

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015



**Figure 2.22**  
**Occupations Gaining the Most New Jobs in Florida**

Rank	Code	Occupation	2015 Employment	2023 Employment	2015-23 Level Change	2015-23 Percent Growth	Total Job Openings
1	412031	Retail Salespersons	344,846	391,259	49,413	13.5	142,563
2	353021	Combined Food Prep and Serving Workers Incl. Fast Food	231,200	271,131	39,931	17.2	115,048
3	434051	Customer Service Representatives	219,039	249,981	30,942	14.1	78,200
4	436014	Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	185,531	215,051	29,520	15.9	47,332
5	291141	Registered Nurses	168,885	196,503	27,618	16.4	52,995
6	353031	Waiters and Waitresses	210,126	231,053	20,927	10.0	103,363
7	311014	Nursing Assistants	89,500	108,035	18,535	20.7	31,882
8	372011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping	124,617	142,478	17,861	14.3	36,142
9	352014	Cooks, Restaurant	95,857	112,564	16,707	17.4	31,876
10	472061	Construction Laborers	63,651	79,706	16,055	25.2	26,904
11	537062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	135,018	150,708	15,690	11.6	49,379
12	472031	Carpenters	59,653	74,802	15,149	25.4	21,052
13	373011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	100,774	115,176	14,402	14.3	34,732
14	439061	Office Clerks, General	154,202	167,735	13,533	8.8	39,313
15	252021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	69,726	83,235	13,509	19.4	25,717
16	433031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	105,444	118,830	13,386	12.7	21,127
17	434171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	82,178	94,539	12,361	15.0	30,275
18	339032	Security Guards	82,945	95,060	12,115	14.6	22,081
19	412011	Cashiers	223,396	235,165	11,769	5.3	93,726
20	372012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	90,185	101,843	11,658	12.9	25,655

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, October 2015



Occupational employment projections tables for all Florida geographic areas can be found on the Labor Market Statistics Website at <http://floridajobs.org/labor-market-information>. Tables for occupations adding the most new jobs, occupations with the fastest growth rates and declining occupations are available.

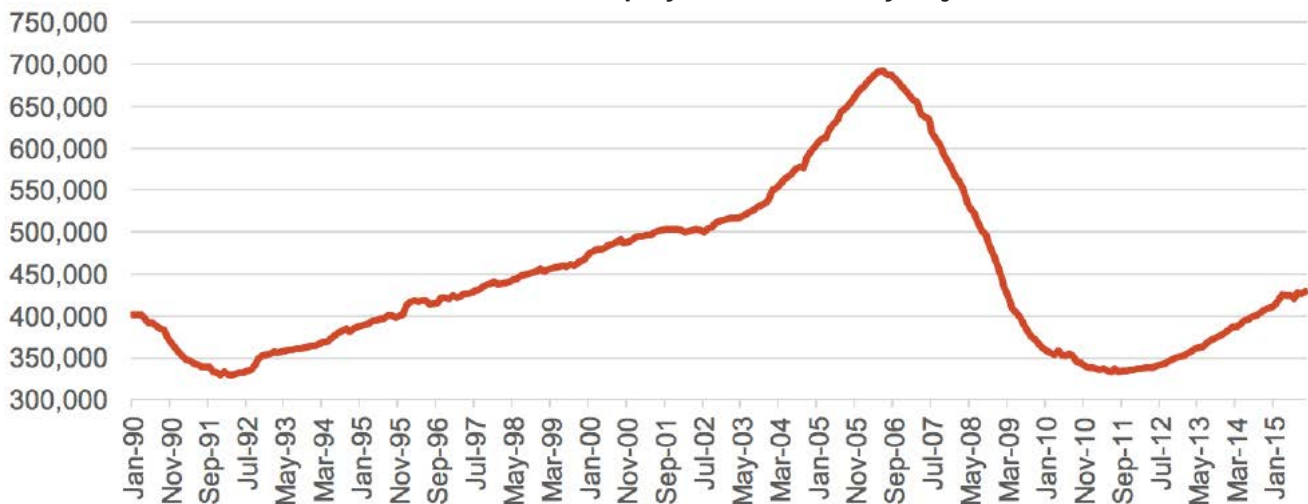
## Florida Industries

### ***Mining, Logging, and Construction***

Florida experienced large declines in construction employment from 2006 to 2011 due to the bursting of the housing bubble. Construction employment peaked in June 2006 at 691,900 jobs and is currently at 429,500 jobs (a decrease of 262,400 jobs). At the trough of the recession, construction employment was at 329,800. About 99,700 jobs in the industry have been recovered.

Florida does not have seasonally adjusted data for employment in mining and logging. However, there is data for construction. In September 2015, the employment was 429,500. The over the year change in September 2015 (+26,700 jobs, +6.6 percent) was 3,700 less when compared to September 2014 (+30,400 jobs, +8.2 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past four years.

**Figure 2.23**  
**Florida Construction Employment Seasonally Adjusted**



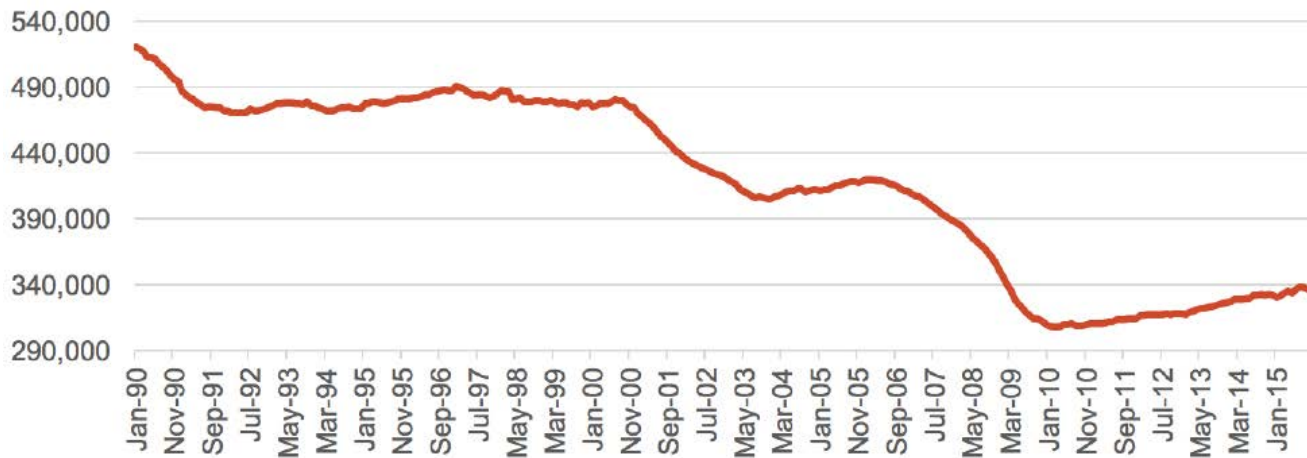
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program, October 2015

**Manufacturing**

Manufacturing in Florida is heavily dependent on construction and several subsectors of the industry lost jobs due to the decline in housing activity. From 2003 to 2006, manufacturing employment began to ramp up until the housing bubble began to burst. During the recession, there was a rapid decrease in manufacturing employment until 2010. About 28,300 jobs in the industry have been recovered.

In September 2015, the employment was 336,300. The over the year change in September 2015 (+3,500 jobs, +1.1 percent) was 4,900 less when compared to September 2014 (+8,400, +2.6 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past five years.

**Figure 2.24**  
**Florida Manufacturing Employment Seasonally Adjusted**

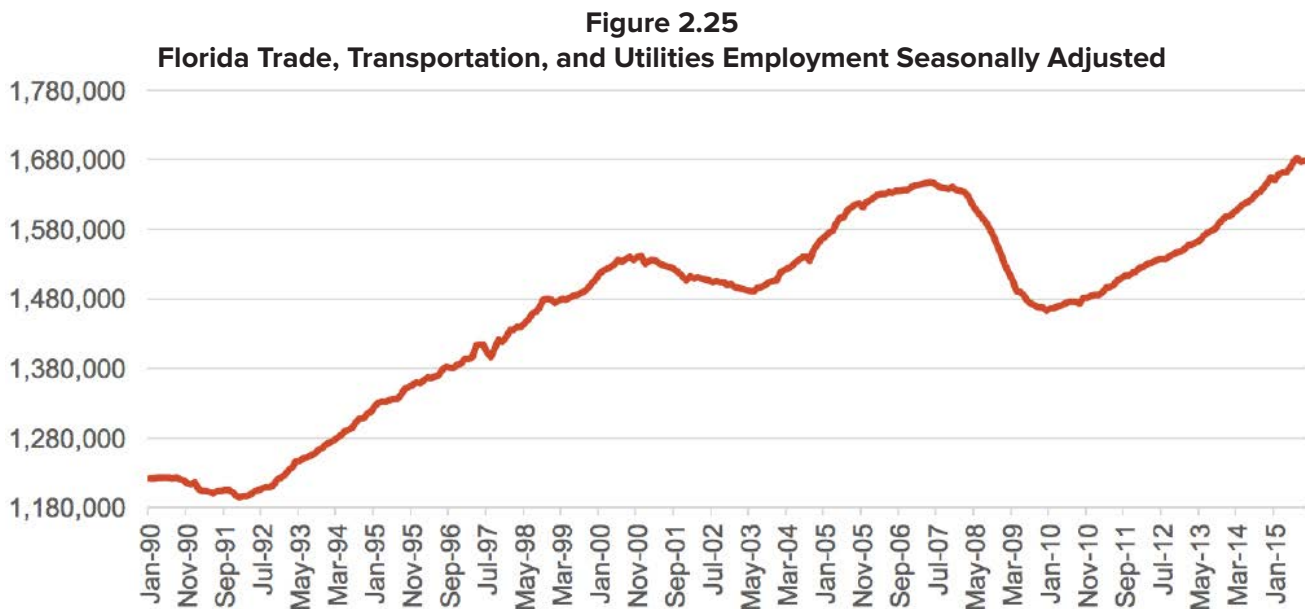


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program, October 2015

**Trade, Transportation, and Utilities**

This industry is heavily dependent on tourism and the general economic vitality of the state's economy. The industry peaked in May 2007 at 1,647,600 jobs and began a rapid decline until 2010. Currently, industry employment is 30,400 jobs above its 2007 peak.

In September 2015, the employment was 1,678,000. The over the year change in September 2015 (+44,500 jobs, +2.7 percent) was 9,100 less when compared to September 2014 (+53,600, +3.4 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past six years.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

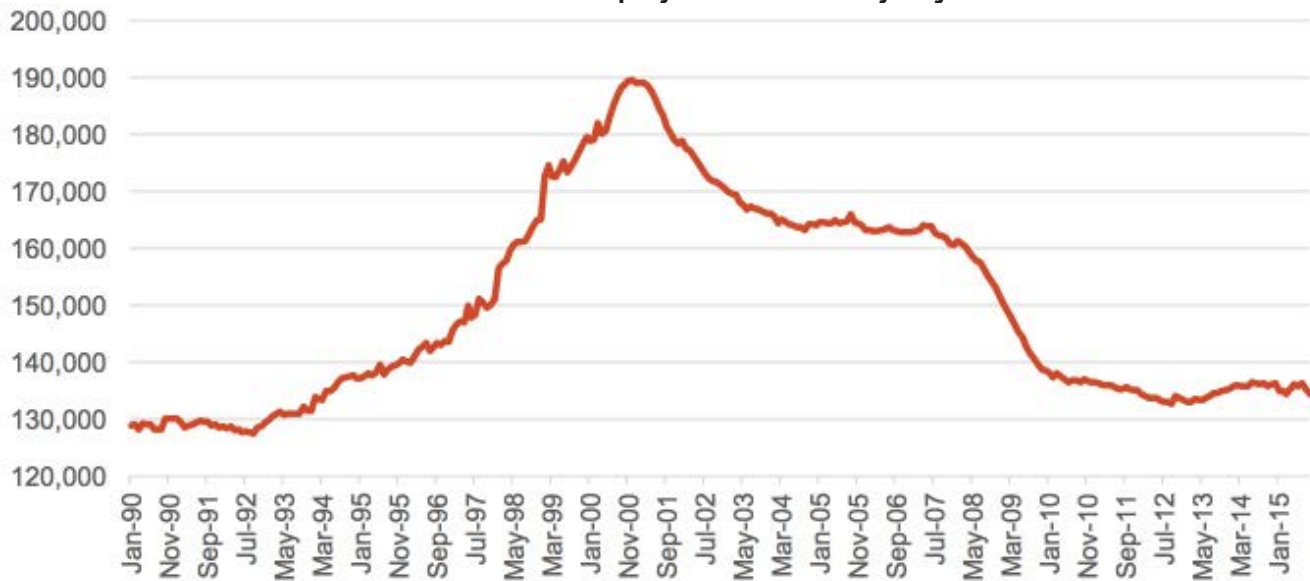
Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Information**

Florida experienced large declines in information employment from 2001 to 2004 due to the bursting of the tech bubble and from 2007 to 2009 due to the bursting of the housing bubble. Industry employment has remained steady since the trough of the Great Recession and is currently at 1994 levels.

In September 2015, the employment was 134,400. The over the year change in September 2015 (-1,900 jobs, -1.4 percent) was 3,500 less when compared to September 2014 (+1,600, +1.2 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has remained fairly constant over the past five years.

**Figure 2.26**  
**Florida Information Employment Seasonally Adjusted**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

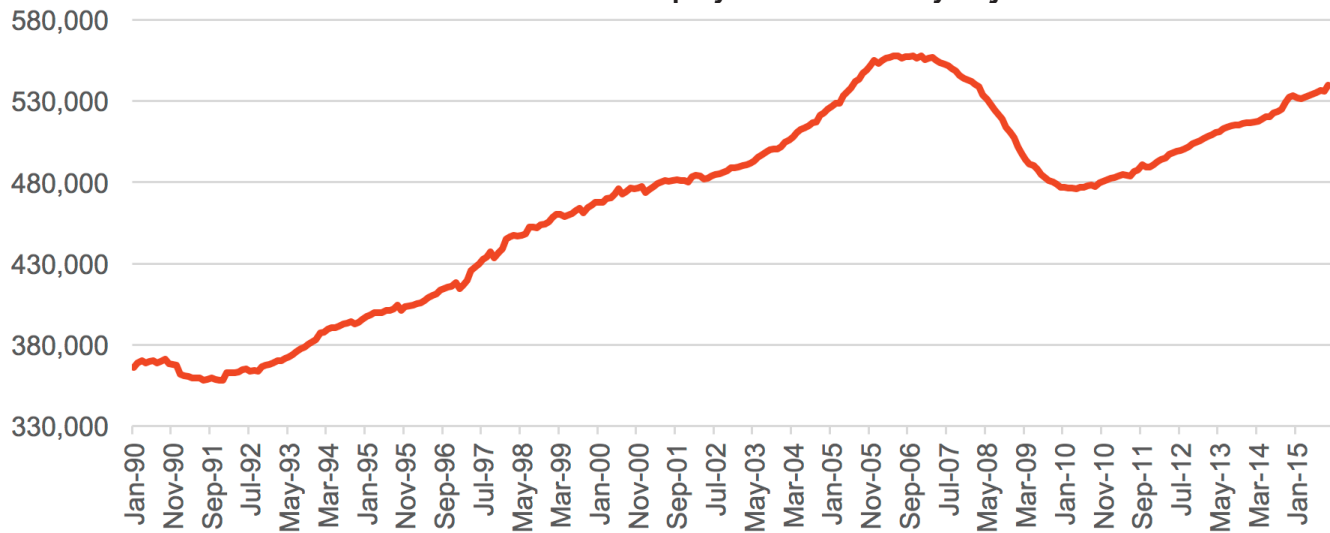
Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Financial Activities**

Financial activities employment in Florida peaked at 558,000 jobs in 2007 and experienced a rapid decline until reaching 476,000 employed in April 2010. About 63,800 jobs in the industry have been recovered.

In September 2015, the employment was 539,800. The over the year change in September 2015 (+15,000 jobs, +2.9 percent) was 5,500 more when compared to September 2014 (+9,500, +1.8 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past five years.

**Figure 2.27**  
**Florida Financial Activities Employment Seasonally Adjusted**



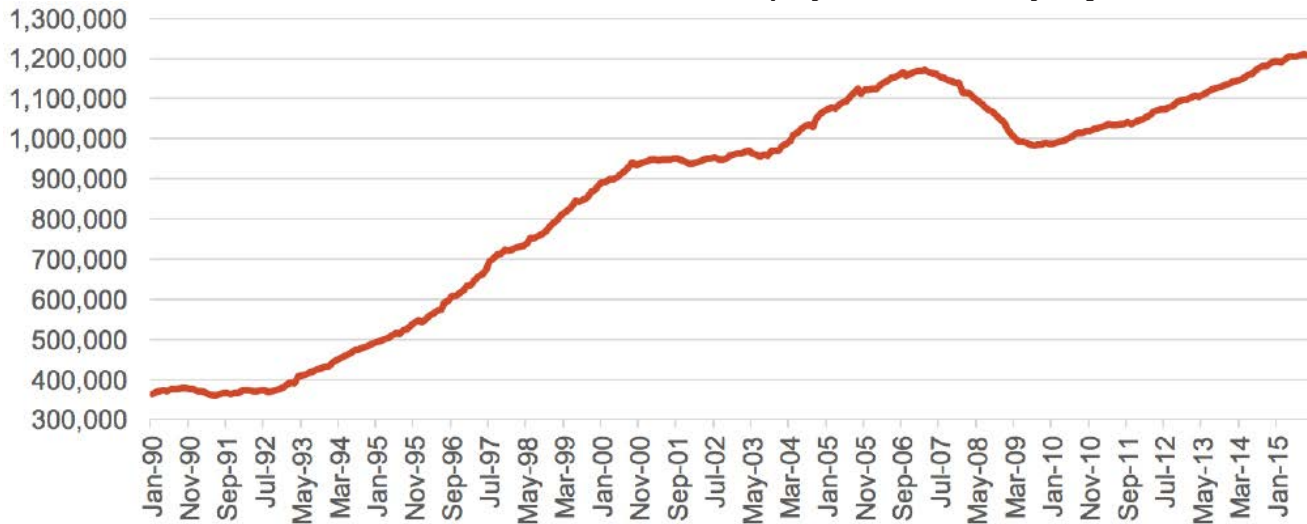
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Professional and Business Services**

Employment in Florida's professional and business services industry experienced a rapid decline during the Great Recession, bottoming out at 983,600 jobs. Currently, industry employment is above its previous peak.

In September 2015, the employment was 1,206,700. The over the year change in September 2015 (+26,300 jobs, +2.2 percent) was 26,700 less when compared to September 2014 (+53,000, +4.7 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past five years.

**Figure 2.28****Florida Professional and Business Services Employment Seasonally Adjusted**

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

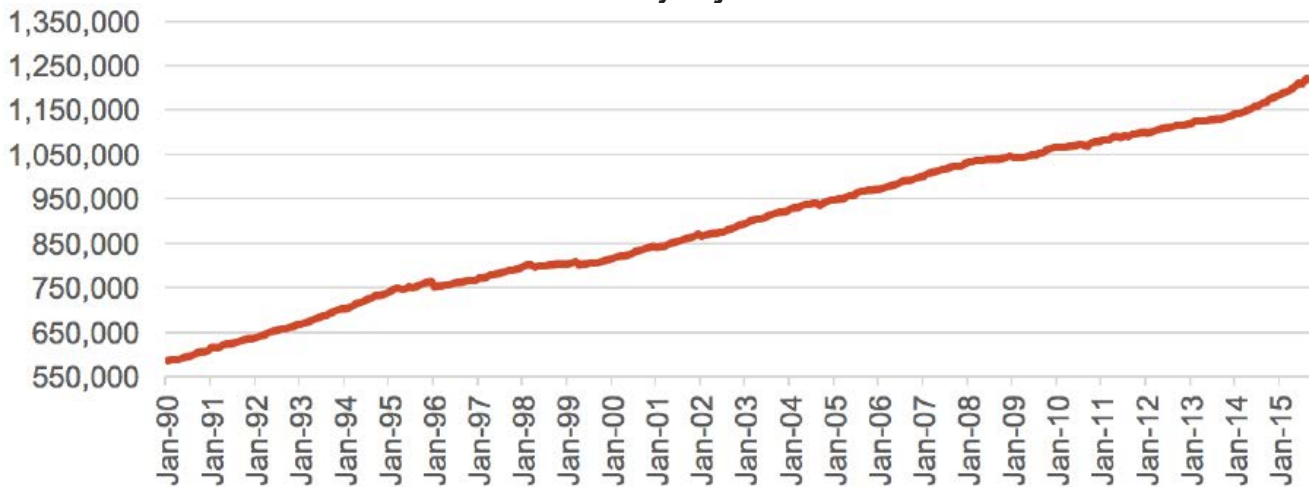
Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Education and Health Services**

Florida did not experience a decline in education and health services employment during the recent recession. However, the rate of job growth did slow down during the recession.

In September 2015, the employment was 1,218,100. The over the year change in September 2015 (+50,200 jobs, +4.3 percent) was 12,800 more when compared to September 2014 (+37,400, +3.3 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward for over two decades.

**Figure 2.29**  
**Florida Education and Health Services Employment**  
**Seasonally Adjusted**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

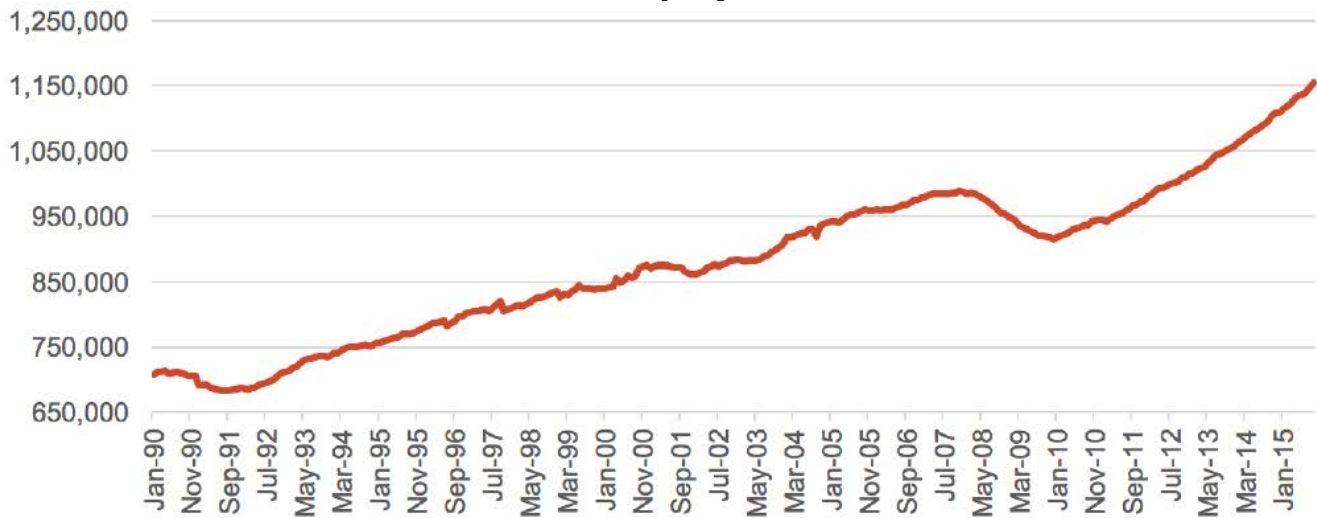
Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

***Leisure and Hospitality***

Leisure and hospitality employment in Florida experienced a large decrease during the Great Recession, reaching 913,800 employed. Currently, industry employment is above its previous peak.

In September 2015, the employment was 1,153,800. The over the year change in September 2015 (+58,100 jobs, +5.3 percent) was 10,200 more when compared to September 2014 (+47,900, +4.6 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past six years.

**Figure 2.30**  
**Florida Leisure and Hospitality Employment**  
**Seasonally Adjusted**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

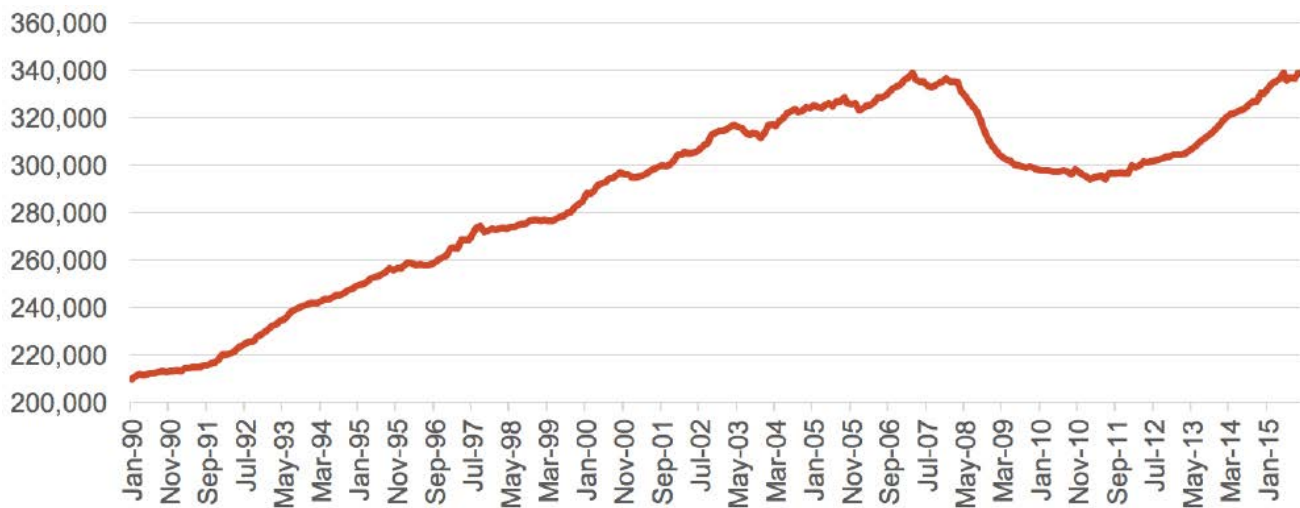
Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

**Other Services**

Other services is a sector that comprises establishments engaged in providing services not specifically provided for elsewhere in the industry classification system. Examples range from automotive repair and maintenance to environment, conservation, and wildlife organizations. Other services employment in Florida experienced large declines from 2007 to around 2009. Industry employment is currently above its previous peak.

In September 2015, the employment was 338,800. The over the year change in September 2015 (+12,200 jobs, +3.7 percent) was 2,200 less when compared to September 2014 (+14,400, +4.6 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has been trending upward over the past four years.

**Figure 2.31**  
**Florida Other Services Employment**  
**Seasonally Adjusted**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

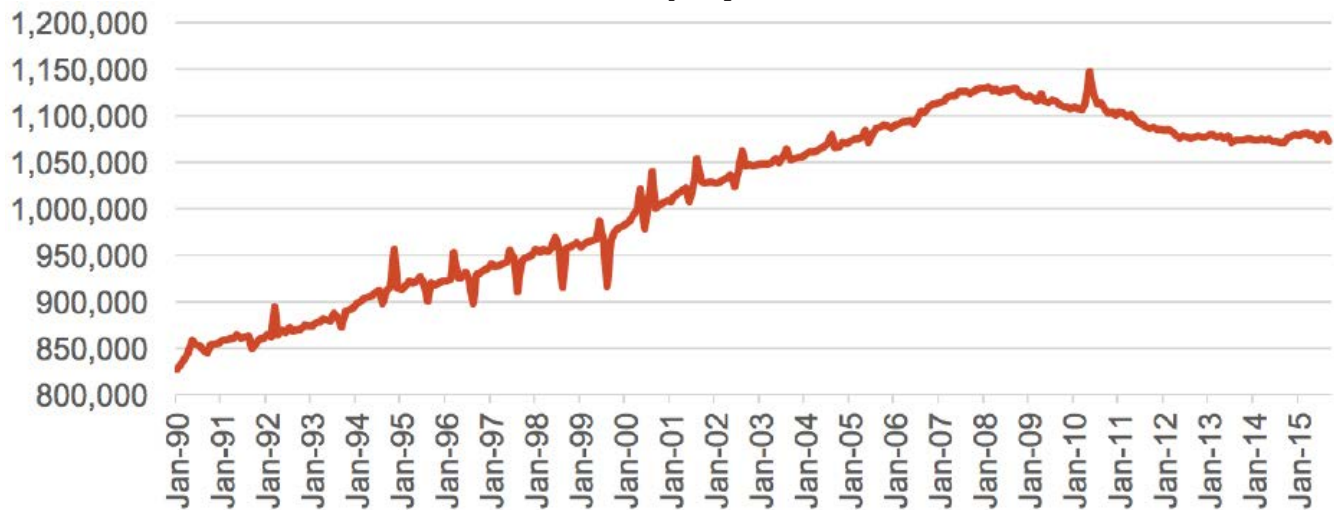


### Government

Florida experienced declines in government employment from 2008 to 2012. Currently, government employment is back to 2005 levels.

In September 2015, the employment was 1,073,000. The over the year change in September 2015 (+1,300 jobs, +0.1 percent) was 3,700 more when compared to September 2014 (-2,400, -0.2 percent). The number of jobs in this sector has remained fairly constant over the past three years.

**Figure 2.32**  
**Florida Government Employment**  
**Seasonally Adjusted**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics Program.

Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics, October 2015

### (iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

In 2013, the most common educational attainment level of Florida workforce participants from 25 to 64 years old was some college or Associate degree at 32.6 percent, followed by bachelor's degree or higher at 30.0 percent, and then high school diploma (including equivalency) at 27.5 percent. Only 9.9 percent of workforce participants had attained less than a high school diploma.

**Figure 2.33**  
**Florida Educational Attainment for the Civilian Labor Force, Age 25-64 (2013)**

Less than high school graduate	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
747,667	2,083,504	2,468,215	2,269,410
9.9%	27.5%	32.6%	30.0%



### Analysis of Educational Attainment of Floridians and Ability to Speak English

Adult education programs offer Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction for adults to improve their English speaking and writing skills but also to improve their academic skills so that they can earn a high school credential and enter postsecondary education to improve their career options. Adults enrolling in ESOL programs fall in the age ranges of 16 to 60+. During 2014-2015, some 205,355 adults were enrolled in ABE, ESOL and ASE (adult high school and GED®) courses. Of the total enrollment, 86,000 adults were enrolled in ESOL courses. The chart below provides an analysis of age ranges and ability to speak English. This is a significant number of limited English speaking adults who could benefit from ESOL courses as well as building their basic skills. Many of these individuals are also seeking employment for jobs that may not require an ability to speak English well or at all.

The one-stop career center partners will collaborate to provide services, resources and referrals to limited English speaking jobseekers.

**Figure 2.34**  
**Analysis of Age Range and Ability to Speak English**

English Ability	Age range	Number
Speaks English not well	16-19	14,089
	20-29	68,114
	30-39	126,782
	40-49	158,778
	50-59	141,201
	60-69	117,653
	Total	626,617
Does not speak English	16-19	3,230
	20-29	34,820
	30-39	65,370
	40-49	73,755
	50-59	70,117
	60-69	68,659
	Total	315,951
	Total for both	942,568



**Figure 2.35**  
**Educational Attainment and Ability to Speak English**

English ability	Less than high school credential	Number
Speaks English not well	Grade 8 or less	201,489
	Grades 9 to 12 no degree	110,624
Does not speak English	Grade 8 or less	165,729
	Grades 9 to 12 no degree	63,217
	Total	541,059

Source: 2014 Census

For Florida's population age 25 and over (2,184,335) with disabilities, ACS provides the following educational attainment estimates:

- Less than high school graduate- 23.9%
- High school graduate (includes equivalency)- 34.1%
- Some college or associate's degree- 26.3%
- Bachelor's degree or higher- 15.7%

(iv) Describe apparent 'skill gaps'

To fully understand the skills gaps apparent in Florida, the state is planning to conduct further research and analysis on this topic. Skills gaps are a major data deficit in the national workforce system, although skills are mentioned multiple times in WIOA. This study will provide the first data set that links employer reported skills gaps to occupations in Florida. Skills gaps and job vacancy data by industry and occupation can be used to design workforce services (including On-the-job training (OJT) contracts, wrap-around services, and training requirements) and educational curriculum (soft skills and hard/technical skills targeted by occupation, training program or major). One goal of this study will be to develop a process for benchmark updates, by using the results to target follow-up efforts in particular occupations, industries and areas. The relationship between wages and skills will be analyzed by evaluating wage growth rates for occupations with significant skills gaps. The hypothesis is that occupations with greater skills gaps will experience slower wage growth. Given the relative stability of the current economy and labor market, changes in skill demand will likely be slow. These data will be valuable as a benchmarking tool using real-time demand measures.



## (2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

### (A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

An analysis of Florida's workforce development activities demonstrates a broad range of services offered to Florida residents. The state's WIOA core partners of **CareerSource Florida, Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Career and Adult Education (DCAE)** provide services that assist the state in delivering workforce, education, and training activities in a cohesive manner.

#### One-Stop Career Centers

Florida's career center system was initially established to bring workforce and welfare transition programs together to simplify and improve access for employers seeking qualified workers and training for new or existing employees as well as for job seekers.

Over time, many of Florida's career centers have expanded their services and programs and have invited other partners to co-locate both physically and through website linkages. Some local Areas have created "satellite" career centers that are strategically located within other community partners' facilities such as at local chambers, libraries and community-based organizations. These partnerships and co-locations have become increasingly important in laying the foundation for implementing WIOA, which emphasizes local and community partnerships and close collaboration with core partners to improve employment outcomes. All of Florida's career centers are affiliated with each other using the CareerSource Florida affiliate brand.

Several local workforce development boards (LWDBs) deploy mobile career centers to provide services to Florida businesses and workers in support of special events or in areas where access can be challenging. With major emphasis on providing on-site services at employer sites and direct service delivery in rural communities and other locations throughout the local areas, the use of mobile career centers continues to serve as a cost-effective and customer-friendly service solution. The mobile career centers also have played an integral role in the delivery of services and assistance during hurricanes and other disaster events.

WIOA emphasizes the importance of serving the business customer. The CareerSource Florida network is a key resource for businesses seeking qualified workers and grants for customized training for new or existing employees. All 24 LWDBs have established dedicated business services teams that are working to partner closely with Florida's VR business relations teams. In several cases, designated career centers in business districts to help local employers recruit, train and retain workers.

**Communications Tools**

Increasingly, digital communication and social media are replacing traditional outreach tools and media as effective and efficient methods of educating and informing current and potential customers and partners. While still employing traditional outreach tactics such as print and radio advertising, CareerSource Florida is following the growing trend of using digital platforms to reach both employers and job seekers.

The CareerSource Florida website serves as an important communications tool for accessing information about statewide initiatives, the latest news, policy updates and board actions, state board meetings and workforce system successes. CareerSource Florida also employs integrated communications tactics including several social media accounts and paid and earned media to inform Florida's job seekers, workers and businesses as well as board members, state and local partners and various stakeholders. CareerSource Florida's social media presence on platforms including Facebook and Twitter has been recognized by local area offices of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Employment & Training Administration as a best practice.

Additional CareerSource Florida communication tools include timely and relevant updates on workforce system issues and news, frequent electronic messages from the President/CEO of CareerSource Florida to the CareerSource Florida Board, Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and LWDBs; *The Chairman's Corner* quarterly e-newsletter written by the CareerSource Florida Board Chair; regularly scheduled and special legislative updates; and news releases and special alerts as warranted.

CareerSource Florida invests in statewide advertising and outreach to help businesses and job seekers locate and connect with the resources and services available through the state workforce development system. The 2014-2015 statewide advertising plan aimed to build upon the growing brand awareness of the CareerSource Florida network. Through strategic advertising placements, copy and design, and a strong call to action, workers and employers are encouraged to visit [careersourceflorida.com](http://careersourceflorida.com) to access the CareerSource Florida network's services and resources. In particular, the plan emphasized informing employers of the resources, services and access to skilled talent available via the CareerSource Florida network. Digital placements via social media and "banner" ads on relevant websites are two of the means by which CareerSource Florida seeks to harness technology to support traditional advertising like print publications and radio programming.

**Employ Florida Marketplace: Online Workforce Services and Virtual Career Center**

In today's technology-driven marketplace, job seekers and businesses need access to workforce services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Employ Florida Marketplace website at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) is Florida's virtual job-matching tool, providing access at *no charge* to great employment opportunities, resume-building resources and many other services to help connect businesses, job seekers and Floridians looking to grow in their careers.

Since Employ Florida launched in 2005, 190,470 employers have registered on the site and nearly 2.5 million resumes have been posted. Employ Florida provides businesses valuable information on training grants as well as links to labor market information and talent tools available at both the state and local levels. Florida's job seekers are able to search for employment opportunities from numerous job and corporate websites as well as those placed directly on Employ Florida by businesses or through LWDBs and/or career centers, making Employ Florida the most comprehensive source for current Florida job openings.

Both employers and job seekers can locate Florida's workforce services and resources anywhere in the state via Employ Florida or by calling the toll-free Employ Florida Helpdesk, staffed by DEO.

The Florida Abilities Work portal at [abilitieswork.employflorida.com](http://abilitieswork.employflorida.com) is a tool for employers and job seekers with disabilities. The micro-portal is housed on the Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) website with a logo button for ease of access. The portal was specifically designed to provide resources to persons with disabilities and to assist employers who are interested in hiring. The 2014 Florida Legislature appropriated funding for a help desk that is staffed by VR. The portal was developed in response to the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities. In its first report to the governor, one of the recommendations was for a single point of contact for employers seeking to hire persons with disabilities. EFM seemed like a natural fit and the Florida Abilities Work portal was conceived. This was a collaborative process with input from the APD, VR and Division of Blind Services (FDBS), and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to name a few. Focus groups convened around the state, allowing input from stakeholder groups such as employers, field staff, customers and family members, and a communications group, comprising representatives from partner agencies, also met during development to ensure a consistent message.

Employ Florida is consistently upgraded to maintain relevancy and incorporate improved technology. The use of micro-portals, powered by Employ Florida, that provide specialized and targeted job matching adds value for both employers and job seekers with specific interests and needs. To date, CareerSource Florida and DEO, in collaboration with LWDBs and other partners, maintain dedicated entry points with customized job-search information and resources for Florida veterans, job seekers age 50 and older, those interested in green jobs, and people with disabilities.

In addition to the broad range of activities above, Florida's partners who serve specific population engage in activities critical to Florida's workforce development network.

**Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Workforce Development Activities**

Activities for youth and students are designed to assist in developing a concept of work, navigating the community, and obtaining work experience during high school. Pre-Employment Transition Services include vocational evaluation, career guidance and counseling, work readiness training, and experiential activities such as community-based work experience and on-the-job training. Support services include assistive technology and services, transportation and uniforms. Intensive services are designed for those who need additional support with appropriate work behavior, require repetition to acquire skills, build endurance to work, and identify the right fit or environment for work. These services include Discovery, Project SEARCH, those provided under Third-party Cooperative Arrangements with school districts, and tuition, books and supplies for Post-Secondary Education programs.

VR offers services for adults (and youth, if needed to achieve job goals) that include vocational and other assessments to help a job seeker best define their job goal. If needed to meet their goal, medical and psychological services are obtained. VR helps job seekers obtain educational or job readiness training to prepare for their career. Job search, placement, coaching, supported employment and self-employment services are available, as well as interpretive, assistive and rehabilitation technology services. VR maintains a vast network of contracted employment service providers throughout the state, and has initiatives in place to increase the variety and quantity of services offered.

VR has formalized a Business Relations Program, with the vision to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships will lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers. Efforts are underway in the Business Relations Program to define and customize services to employers, create strategic partnerships to support workforce needs, and establish an employment-focused culture within the rehabilitation process.

**Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) Workforce Development Activities**

FDBS has identified a number of activities that are anticipated to expand, integrate and improve services to individuals with visual disabilities within the workforce system while increasing collaboration among core partners. The activities include:

- Expanding opportunities for students to receive FDBS services and secure opportunities for students and youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills.
- Ensuring that clients who participate in training and education programs benefit from engagement.
- Expanding utilization of online job systems such as DEO's web portal, the state/federal Talent Acquisition Portal, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job-ready FDBS consumers.
- Encouraging and Tracking industry certifications, apprenticeships and post-secondary outcomes.
- Developing and implementing an Employment Skills Training Program at the FDBS Residential Rehabilitation Center to better prepare blind and visually impaired youth and adults for success in future employment.
- Increasing the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.



- Implementing a comprehensive communications and outreach plan.
- Increasing outreach services to under-served and un-served populations.
- Working with each client to ensure that Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) goals are consistent with and/or are amenable to transportation resources.
- Developing and strengthening employer relationships by providing employer training, support, education and resources related to employing individuals with visual impairments in accordance with Section 503 regulations.
- Strengthening statewide collaborative partnerships with core partners.
- Increasing opportunities for data sharing and improving data validity and integrity.
- Promoting integrated employment in the community as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities under the Employment First Initiative.
- Maintaining and strengthening contracts with private non-profit organizations to provide four core components: Vocational Rehabilitation, Transition, Supported Employment, and Rehabilitation Engineering.
- Increasing the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.
- Increasing the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.
- Supporting FDBS clients in becoming self-supporting.
- Identifying an approach to expedite eligibility and service delivery to individuals who are at risk of losing employment.
- Increasing staff development and continuing education.
- Aligning FDBS policies and procedures to address new WIOA requirements.
- Providing ongoing Employment Outcomes Professional II Training to vocational rehabilitation staff and community providers.
- Providing training and education sponsorship to eligible vocational rehabilitation clients and staff.
- Supporting community rehabilitation provider training programs designed for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

**Education and Training Activities for Adult Education**

Florida's adult education system provides academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increases an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent. Adult education programs served 205,355 adults in 2014-15. The State has aligned content standards for adult education with state-adopted academic standards.

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

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

One-stop career center partners and adult education programs work collaboratively within their local areas, and assessment and instructional services are often provided on-site at the centers. Local CareerSource Florida network center staff is provided the opportunity to participate in Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) trainings conducted by DCAE throughout the year. Many CareerSource Florida network career centers provide representatives directly to the adult education facility to provide counseling, advising, and other services related to awareness of workforce resources. The sharing of cross-referral outcomes will be a priority of DCAE to support the goals of WIOA and increase student access and achievement.

**(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

As is demonstrated in section 2(A) above, Florida's workforce network partners are successful in serving customers and putting Floridians to work. Each of the WIOA core program partners performs successfully, indicating that these partnerships can be leveraged at the state and local levels to enhance any areas of weakness that emerge. The strength of Florida's workforce network is demonstrated by the relationships already formed and the opportunities already identified for coordinated service delivery, as the implementation of WIOA continues. Currently, Florida's WIOA partners have ample statewide coverage for all programs, with skilled and experienced professional team members. The state workforce board, LWDBs, VR, and Division of Blind Services (FDBS) all have established business relationship teams working together to serve employers. Additional improvements are taking place in Florida's workforce network, including a Residential Center training program within the FDBS in place by early 2016 and increased utilization of Florida's Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System.



Continuous improvement of how Florida's workforce network serves customers will require continued collaboration, coordination, and re-assessment. The identification of both strengths and weaknesses is an ongoing process for the core programs working to implement WIOA. Working groups discussed in section III(b)(7) have begun to address data integration issues as a potential challenge for WIOA implementation. There is a need to review all WIOA program services, programs, and policies to identify duplicative efforts and potential solutions to better align agency resources and efforts. Also, Florida must work to address accessibility of job network computer systems, outreach and community visibility for programs that serve job seekers with disabilities, and transportation for job seekers with disabilities.

### (C) State Workforce Development Capacity

Given the knowledge and experience of Florida's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act core program partners, Florida is well prepared to continue delivering workforce development services. Continued communication and enhanced collaboration among the WIOA State Leadership Team and working groups will be paramount in building the capacity of the state's workforce system.

Capacity also depends upon the continued success of Florida's 24 local workforce development boards. They and their WIOA partners are working toward innovative methods for delivery of services to job seekers and employers in their local areas. A heightened focus on customer service and business engagement is helping increase Florida's workforce network capacity.

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) currently has 76 unit offices throughout Florida, and has opened an additional 18 private contracted offices to increase its service capacity and ensure continuity of services. Factors such as staff turnover and Order of Selection (OOS) waitlists affect customer service capacity, and VR's leadership uses data projection models to monitor trends and guide decision-making regarding fiscal, caseload and waitlist performance.

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

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

FDBS has aligned and dedicated vocational rehabilitation staff to coordinate, implement and track workforce development activities across multiple programs. Additionally, FDBS has long-established relationships with statewide Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who provide direct vocational rehabilitation, transition, supported employment and rehabilitation engineering services to clients statewide. Through existing staff and community rehabilitation program partners, FDBS feels certain that it has the capacity to implement the identified workforce development activities.

FDBS conducts on-going training needs assessment for the purpose of ensuring compliance of federal and state mandates and; examining individual personnel training requirements related to current job performance, future job requirements, and promotional or career advancement needs.



Adult education programs in Florida are provided by district, colleges, and community-based organizations. Some counties may not offer adult education programs, however, colleges in those service areas have been awarded federal grants to provide adult education programs in those areas. There are 642 locations offering adult education services. This includes main sites and satellite programs located throughout the community. Transportation is a barrier for many adults so local programs plan locations that are accessible for potential adult students.

## **(b) State Strategic Vision and Goals**

### **(1) Vision**

Through the implementation of WIOA, Florida will have a business-led, market-responsive, results-oriented and integrated workforce development system. The enhanced system will foster customer service excellence, seek continuous improvement and demonstrate value by enhancing employment opportunities for all individuals, including those with disabilities. This focused and deliberate collaboration among education, workforce, and economic development networks will maximize the competitiveness of Florida businesses and the productivity of Florida's workforce, thus increasing economic prosperity.

### **(2) Goals**

**Florida's strategic vision for WIOA implementation will be realized by accomplishing these three goals:**

- Enhance alignment and market responsiveness of workforce, education and economic development systems through improved service integration that provides businesses with skilled, productive, and competitive talent and Floridians with employment, education, training, and support services that reduce welfare dependence and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency, high-skill and high-wage careers and lifelong learning.
- Promote accountable, transparent, and data-driven workforce investment through performance measures, monitoring and evaluation that informs strategies, drives operational excellence, leads to the identification and replication of best practices and empowers an effective and efficient workforce delivery system.
- Improve career exploration, educational attainment and skills training for in-demand industries and occupations for Florida youth that lead to enhanced employment, career development, credentialing, and post-secondary education opportunities.



### (3) Performance Goals

The core WIOA programs are working to develop a process for collecting data and reporting performance. Core programs will also assist state and local workforce boards to negotiate levels of performance. Those levels of performance will be reviewed and approved by the core program senior leadership, the state workforce board, and ultimately the governor. Data will be housed in the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) system for reporting by WIOA core programs. Performance levels will use the statistical model that is still under development by the federal departments of education and labor and take into consideration state and local economic factors including unemployment rates, industry sectors, and characteristics of participants entering the program (e.g., work history, work experience, educational / occupational skills attainment, literacy levels, disability status, etc.). The core measures include:

1. Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit
2. Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during fourth quarter after exit
3. Median earnings of participants during second quarter after exit
4. Percentage of participants who obtain a postsecondary credential or secondary school diploma within 1 year after exit
5. Achievement of measureable skill gains toward credential or employment
6. Effectiveness in serving employers (These criteria will be jointly developed by secretaries of United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and United States Department of Education (USDOE))

Actual performance levels have not yet been established. They will be negotiated after the adoption of final regulations and the establishment of baseline data, where available.

### (4) Assessment

In partnership with the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, all of the core partners will present performance data to the state workforce board quarterly, to assess overall effectiveness of the workforce system. Draft dashboard reports are initially being developed for Title I programs, with additional time for input for VR, FDBS, and DCAE. The substance of these dashboards will be defined and finalized in program year 2017. By presenting dashboards with the data components quarterly to the state workforce board, Florida will ensure that the results are used in a manner to make continuous quality improvements.



## (c) State Strategy

### (1) Implementation of State Strategies

#### **Redefining Customer Service Standards for Business Talent Support**

Continuous improvement is a key value of the CareerSource Florida network. CareerSource Florida is evaluating and redefining all standards and measures (as well as removing any deemed unnecessary) in customer service. This effort enables Florida business, especially those in key target sectors aligned to the state and regional economic development priorities, to fully benefit from CareerSource Florida-administered training grant programs as well as facilitate seamless access to tools and services across partner/organization programs. CareerSource Florida is continuing to build on its Salesforce-based Customer Relationship Management platform to improve business services.

#### **Creating a Total Talent Delivery System / Expanded Business Engagement 3.0**

The umbrella of business support and training services available throughout the CareerSource Florida network enables Florida to be better positioned to respond to short-term and long-term talent needs of existing and new-to-Florida companies. The goal is to facilitate a seamless, external-focused talent solution strategy for Florida business.

Using the market segmentation framework and planning tools in the CareerSource Florida Professional Business Development Tool Kit developed, in part, through the USDOL Expanding Business Engagement grant, helps ensure that businesses of all sizes in all sectors are identified for proactive talent support strategies. CareerSource Florida's Business and Workforce Development Unit will continue to lead network-wide webinars for all business liaisons/account managers who interface with business on talent needs. A strategic outreach plan associated with Florida's human resources professionals will be developed to maximize marketing opportunities. Further, the under-utilized talents and skills of job seekers with barriers to employment are consistently marketed to Florida businesses

#### **Implementing Sector Strategies**

The state board is continuing its focus on sector strategies for healthcare and advanced manufacturing – two key sectors of importance in Florida's economy. These sector initiatives build on a continuous effort to obtain essential business feedback from employers so the entire workforce network can be responsive to their talent needs. The need for market-relevant business intelligence remains important due to rapid economic and competitiveness changes that directly correlate to a skilled talent pipeline.

Advanced Manufacturing Marketplace Business Intelligence Research and Sector Strategy Approach Services: This three-year initiative, begun in 2014, will result in the promotion of business growth by better connecting Florida's advanced manufacturers to existing public and private resources essential for increased competitiveness and profitability, which includes among those resources, leveraging the workforce and talent development assets within the state. The Manufacturers Association of Florida's (MAF) Center for Advanced Manufacturing Excellence (CAME) serves as the Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Leadership Council and coordinates with its 12 Regional Manufacturing Associations (RMAs). Both the Council and the RMAs, comprising Florida industry, drive business-led improvements in talent delivery.

**The purpose of the initiative is to:**

- Promote advanced manufacturing business growth.
- Better connect Florida’s advanced manufacturers to existing public and private resources.
- Leverage the workforce and talent development assets within the state.
- Create a new sector strategy approach for advanced manufacturing.
- Create an essential business feedback loop to ensure a robust Florida workforce network.
- Develop solutions for the advanced manufacturing talent delivery system.
- Establish how the USDOL and other selected grants have impacted the talent pipeline in the last three to five years.

**The first year of the three-year initiative resulted in the following:**

- A Florida Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Leadership Council was established within CAME.
- Manufacturing focus groups were held in 12 regions.
- Two problem-solving sessions with manufacturers and partnering organizations.
- Research was conducted to define the advanced manufacturing sector, identify core occupations, and evaluate data points for the sector and how they are used for decision making.
- Preparation of a plan to analyze USDOL and other key manufacturing investments in Florida.
- Preparation of a Year-end Summary of activities and findings with proposed action for subsequent year(s).

Details on this project can be found at [mafcenter.org](http://mafcenter.org).

Healthcare Business Intelligence Research and Sector Strategy Approach Services: Florida’s Healthcare Workforce Initiative resulted in the formation of a Statewide Florida Healthcare Workforce Leadership Council (FHWL) in 2014-2015. The Council serves as the primary point of contact for statewide healthcare industry-specific labor market intelligence and is used by the state’s workforce network to facilitate policy and strategy development. The FHWL resulted in a new sector strategy approach for healthcare to develop and continue an essential business feedback loop to ensure Florida’s workforce network has a deep understanding of and is responsive to the talent needs of the state. Common issues and needs of employers are identified and coordinated solutions developed for the healthcare talent delivery system. Professional and State Advisory Resource Groups have been established as a source for information and data, which is essential to enable healthcare workforce policy and strategy development. In addition, the initiation of regional councils is underway to consider issues specific to Florida’s unique cultures that exist at the local level.

**The purpose of the initiative is to:**

- Identify gaps in healthcare workforce supply and demand data, and design a collection system to effectively analyze data at the state and regional level;
- Develop strategies for recruitment and retention of healthcare workers, including critical need areas across all health professions; and
- Identify emerging workforce roles, such as in healthcare informatics, and develop a method to educate the current workforce regarding value-based care.

Additional information on Florida's Healthcare Workforce Initiative may be found at:  
[www.FLHealthcareWorkforce.org](http://www.FLHealthcareWorkforce.org).

**Sector Partnership National Emergency (NEG) Grant:** With the award of a nearly \$7 million Sector Partnership NEG, CareerSource Florida and DEO will build on Florida's sector strategies approach by providing intensive services and training to program participants in 10 LWDBs so they may obtain industry-recognized credentials and ultimately employment.

**Establishing Career Pathways**

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

DCAE promotes the development of contextualized instruction with a specific career pathway focus, career development, and transition services to be integrated into the lower levels of Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). This content will provide adults with the knowledge and skills they need to enroll and be successful in postsecondary education. After students have achieved the educational functioning levels in ABE and ESOL, the next step for those without a high school diploma may include enrolling in the GED® Preparation program (GED®-i course) and a career and technical certificate program at the same time. Training will be provided to support the development and implementation of contextualized instruction with a career focus, career exploration and planning, and transition services.

**Utilizing a Market-Driven System Approach**

Florida is utilizing the CareerSource Florida network's leadership in market intelligence and market-responsive workforce solutions, Florida will develop a market intelligence portal that will enhance strategic integration throughout Florida's Talent Supply System. The new portal will better position Florida education, workforce and economic development partners to leverage education and training programs to support future economic development, both regionally and statewide, through data-driven solutions.

**Enhancing Performance Measurement**

Over the past year CareerSource Florida, through a collaborative statewide process, has designed a data-driven, outcome-based Performance Funding Model for the CareerSource Florida network that will inform policy discussions and decisions, align resources to shared goals, reward excellence and showcase improvement through a series of critical metrics. This model will be the basis for awarding annual performance incentives and reflects essential system-wide success indicators that align with both state and local priorities. Performance will be awarded based on the TIE Model – Target, Improve and Excel. Long-horizon metrics and short-horizon metrics are being developed for job placements, employer engagement, cost of doing business, and customer satisfaction. These metrics are being designed at the local level with full collaboration across all 24 LWDBs. CareerSource Florida is working to implement the new Performance Funding Model and drive the types of outcomes the CareerSource Florida Network needs for Florida to become the global leader for talent.

**Providing Quality Services to Individuals with Disabilities**

Recognizing the unique barriers Floridians with disabilities may face in finding a job, the CareerSource Florida network will continue to lead, invest and participate in several initiatives to connect these individuals to employers who are ready to hire. In Program Year 2014, DEO launched a new (Employ Florida Marketplace) EFM portal, Abilities Work, to better link employers with job seekers with disabilities. The Abilities Work help desk is administered by VR, and is a resource to support the linkage employers to qualified job seekers with disabilities. More discussion on this portal can be found in section II(2)(A) of this plan.

**Other key employment initiatives to assist Floridians with disabilities include:**

- Employment First Florida – Seven of Florida's state agencies and nonprofit organizations, including CareerSource Florida, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), the Department of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Education (BEES, VR, and FDBS) the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, RESPECT of Florida, and Department of Children and Families- Mental Health and Substance Abuse, coming together through an interagency cooperative agreement to facilitate improved coordination of services to help people with disabilities gain employment and achieve self-sufficiency. The Employment First collaborative is developing a comprehensive and coordinated statewide communications plan to improve outreach regarding the services available in Florida to support employment and training for people with disabilities. This initiative responds directly to a key recommendation of the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities.



- **Family Café** – Through the leadership of Governor Rick Scott, who has led the charge for state agencies and nonprofits to better leverage public and private resources for supporting employment for Floridians with disabilities, CareerSource Florida has become an investor/supporter of the annual Family Café. For over seven years, VR has been involved in planning and presenting information at the Café’s annual conference, and FDBS has been an active participant. The Café is a statewide summit that attracts about 7,000 Floridians with disabilities and their families. It provides a forum for the CareerSource Florida network to offer employment workshops and educate Floridians with disabilities and their families about how to access local workforce services through career centers and take advantage of special resources such as incentives for businesses that hire people with disabilities.
- **Ticket to Work** – Seventeen Florida LWDBs are designated as Employment Networks by the Social Security Administration enabling their participation in the federally funded Ticket to Work program. Through Ticket to Work, recipients of Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income receive priority assistance such as job search, career planning and skill building through participating CareerSource Florida network career centers to enhance their efforts to find and retain a job and work toward becoming self-sufficient. Participating LWDBs receive funding for workforce services provided to “ticketholders” from the Social Security Administration. In Florida, the Ticket to Work program is administered by VR. VR’s Ticket to Work unit is responsible for overseeing the program and systems that track and manage ticket assignment and payments, ensuring timely filing and reimbursement of SSA claims requested by Employment Networks, and providing technical assistance and training to customers and personnel involved in the program.

## **(2) Strategies to Align Core Programs**

### **Florida Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act Task Force**

Florida’s implementation of WIOA began with the formation of a legislatively-created task force comprised of high-ranking officials in each agency with an impact on Florida’s Workforce Development System. The task force was charged with developing WIOA implementation recommendations for approval by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. These recommendations were to include, but not be limited to:

- A review of current workforce service delivery and recommendations for the inclusion of programs;
- Regional planning design;
- One-stop career center service delivery design;
- The integration of economic development, workforce development and Florida’s education system; and
- Development of sector strategies and career pathways.



**As required by the enacting legislation, task force members include leaders of the following partner entities and agencies:**

- Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
- CareerSource Florida;
- Enterprise Florida;
- Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges Inc.;
- Florida College System;
- Florida Department Children and Families;
- Florida Department of Corrections;
- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity;
- Florida Department of Education Commissioner;
- Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services;
- Florida Department of Education, Division of Career and Adult Education;
- Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Florida Department of Elder Affairs;
- Florida Department of Juvenile Justice;
- Florida Small Business Development Center Network;
- Florida Workforce Development Association, Inc.;
- Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, Inc.;
- State University System

CareerSource Florida convened six meetings of the 20-member state WIOA Task Force — two webinars and four in-person meetings. Agendas as well as all information collected throughout the meetings are available on the CareerSource Florida website at [www.careersourceflorida.com/wioa](http://www.careersourceflorida.com/wioa). The task force also visited the CareerSource Florida Capital Region career center in Tallahassee to better inform task force members about career center service delivery.

**Task force members each outlined their entity's role in and contributions to the workforce development system by answering the questions:**

- What is your organization's mission?
- What is your role in Florida's workforce development system?
- What are your top three challenges in providing the best outcomes for those you serve?
- How will the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act help you overcome those challenges?
- What measures do you use to define successful outcomes?



**Task force members discussed their entities' contributions to developing Florida's workforce by explaining:**

- Their organization's governance structure
- Regional operations
- Processes coordinated with other agencies or partners
- Utilization of one-stop career centers
- Their process for service delivery

**Equipped with an understanding of each participating state agency's role in Florida's workforce system, task force members were offered an opportunity to discuss the following questions:**

- Which programs and entities should be included in Florida's workforce development system (combined or unified planning)?
- How should Florida's WIOA planning regions be organized?
- What should be included in a one-stop career center?
- How can Florida's workforce development system better share information, systems, and/or customers?
- What can Florida's workforce development system do to best serve individuals with obstacles to employment?
- How should WIOA-required one-stop career center partners share infrastructure costs?
- Since WIOA requires common measurement and planning for the core programs, what governance or organizational structure would lead to the best outcomes?
- What resources or relationships do you need to implement WIOA?

At the conclusion of the task force meetings, a set of implementation recommendations were approved by the CareerSource Florida Board. These recommendations were discussed with the LWDBs during their formulation.

Additional strategies to align core programs are addressed in section IV.



### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

#### (a) State Strategy Implementation

##### (1) State Board Functions

###### State Board

CareerSource Florida is the state's chief workforce policy organization. A public-private partnership, CareerSource Florida is a non-profit organization that works with many partners across the state to connect employers with qualified, skilled talent and Floridians with employment and career development opportunities to achieve economic prosperity. Chief among its partners are the state DEO – the state agency responsible for workforce policy implementation and administrative and fiscal affairs – and the 24 LWDBs, charged with local delivery of employment and training services to job seekers and businesses.

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors includes the Governor and 38 members appointed by the Governor or legislative leaders. Members contribute in a very tangible way to the development of strategies and policies that drive efforts to ensure Florida has a globally competitive workforce. The work of this board and the entire state workforce system is vital to achieving Governor Rick Scott's priorities for helping Floridians get to work and establishing Florida as the nation's top job-creating state. The state board plays a critical role in strengthening Florida's business climate through its policy setting and oversight role.

###### Governance Structure

The governance structure, through which the state board conducts its work, consists of the board of directors, two councils – the Strategic Policy Council and the Finance Council – and an Executive Committee, which is composed of council chairmen and other board leaders appointed by the board chairman.

###### Strategic Policy Council

- Responsible for analyzing, discussing, vetting and finalizing strategic policies and performance incentives for the CareerSource Florida network as directed by the chairman of the board
- Recommendations of the Strategic Policy Council will be approved/not approved by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors
- Currently, 11 board members serve on this council

###### Finance Council

- Responsible for directing the statewide allocation of workforce system funding
- Responsible for safeguarding the workforce system's resources and assets
- Recommendations of the Finance Council will be approved/not approved by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors
- Currently, nine board members serve on this council

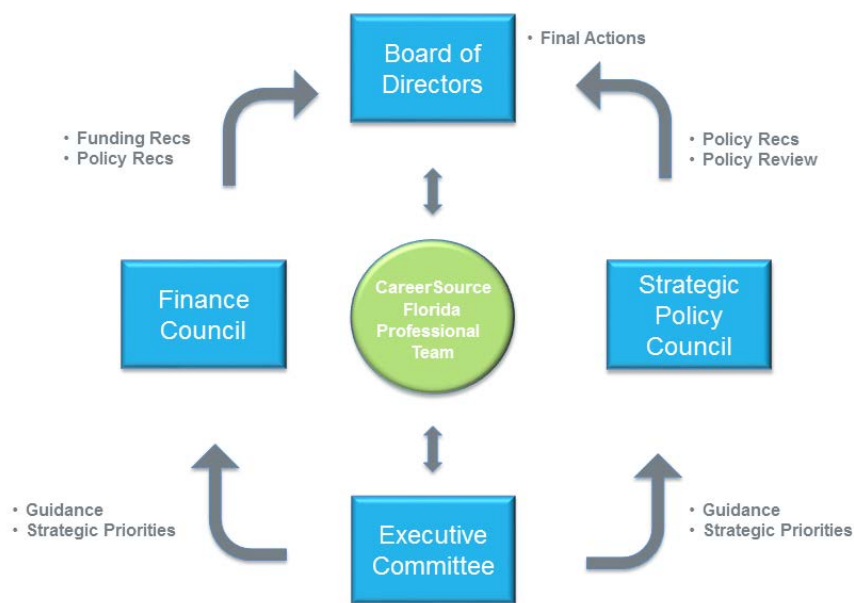


### Executive Committee

- Responsible for determining funding and strategic priorities
- Responsible for forwarding these recommendations to the CareerSource Florida professional team for review and analysis prior to further consideration by the Strategic Policy Council and potential approval by the full board
- Currently, nine board members serve on this committee

Below is a graphic which further outlines the CareerSource Florida Board Governance.

**Figure 3.01**  
**CareerSource Florida Board Governance**



The State board is committed to leveraging the resources entrusted to it with those of its primary workforce-system partners and its many other strategic partners in business, economic development and education to address talent needs at every skill level and cultivate a globally competitive workforce for Florida. To ensure the workforce strategies and policies developed by the state board are implemented throughout the state are consistent with approved state and local plans, the board cultivates collaboration with DEO and Florida's LWDBs, and other partners vital to workforce-services delivery. LWDB partners hold their quarterly meetings in conjunction with the state board's quarterly meetings and there are opportunities to showcase best practices and identify and address barriers to enhanced collaboration and performance outcomes. Additionally, quarterly meetings are held between the state board professional team and the leadership of the LWDBs to discuss strategic issues, identify policy objectives, and discuss best practices for service delivery in Florida. Federal and state program guidance is communicated to local workforce partners through participation in state-level policy development activities and formally promulgated and documented in a series of guidance papers developed by DEO. These policy documents are often vetted by state and local partners before final issuance. This policy and administrative information can be found at <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources>.



## (2) Implementation of State Strategy

### (A) Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Following recommendations of the state's WIOA Task Force, the **CareerSource Florida** Board is expanding to include WIOA's core program partners of Florida Department of Education Divisions of **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**, and **Blind Services (FDBS)**, and **Adult Education (DCAE)**. In addition to strategic input into the state boards' decision-making process, WIOA core program teams focused on strategy implementation and performance accountability reporting discussed in section II(c)(2) will continue to focus on areas for improvement and strategy execution. The core program partners will report on WIOA common measures and other relevant performance information in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Further, all of the core programs will work to:

- Identify issues, policies, and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of all individuals, including individuals with all levels of disability, and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.
- Continue to implement an interagency supported employment planning process for budget coordination which defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
- Pilot innovative service models such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS)/peer mentoring to provide more service options to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VR has expanded the use of Discovery and Customized Employment statewide, and is now focusing on increasing capacity to provide these services. VR continues to develop agreements with and partner with other agencies and organizations to provide customers more access to community resources.
- Fully implement a coordinated business relations program across core programs that includes leveraging community partnerships to engage and support Florida's employers and increase access to appropriate employment and educational services.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document to assist customers in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry. Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Share cross-referral outcomes.
- Educate potential employees who do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent or need to improve their English speaking skills. By obtaining the education required for today's workplace, welfare dependence will be reduced and increased opportunities will be available for high-skill and high-wage careers.
- Continue to improve the statewide management of supported employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding while ensuring accountability. This process will provide a coordinated system of program development for supported employment services.
- Maximize the quality of supported employment service delivery, ensuring a comprehensive, continuous, efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality, and technical assistance.



- Design and implement a program for customers to use to make an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Continue to offer TPCA to all school districts annually. Additional initiatives are underway to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth, including approval of CareerSource Florida to provide pre-placement services, revision of Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant (CBTAC) recertification procedures, and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR also is partnering with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, The Arc of Florida and High School High Tech to offer more On-the-Job Training and community work experiences.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for WIPA services so more VR customers who are ticketholders, youth, and SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work may be served.
- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies. Participate in the development of a consortium of supported employment providers designed to identify, share, and promote innovative employment practices.

#### (B) Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan

##### **Enhancing Partner Collaboration**

The Florida WIOA Task Force recommended state board membership be offered to the Florida Department of Corrections; the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities; the Florida Small Business Development Center Network; and Enterprise Florida, the state's primary economic development organization. While the programs overseen by these organizations are not part of this WIOA plan, it is the intention of CareerSource Florida and the core programs to expand planning efforts to include these programs. Additionally, Florida intends to build on the collaboration established through the WIOA Task Force by continuing to involve other programs and organizations as needed in workforce system updates and in identifying opportunities for partnerships.

Enhanced partnerships are being formed with Florida Office of Apprenticeships, increasing awareness and opportunities for growth for Registered Apprenticeships. The state board will continue to explore these opportunities.

##### **Improving Employment Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders**

An example of an ongoing partnership is a collaboration with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), DEO, CareerSource Florida, and the LWDBs aimed at improving the employment outcomes for juvenile offenders. On January 1, 2015, DJJ and DEO entered into a statewide Memorandum of Agreement to establish general conditions and joint processes that will enable each agency to collaborate as partners to ensure juvenile offenders under the supervision of DJJ have information about and access to services provided by the state's workforce system. The agreement outlines mutual responsibilities that allow for planning at the state, regional and local levels, promotes the development of linkages between DJJ and the LWDBs, encourages collaboration and establishes guidelines for data sharing protocol development.

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

**Partnering with State Colleges**

Another example of coordination with partners outside of this plan can be found in the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCT) Grant. On behalf of the Florida College Consortium, St. Petersburg College received a \$15 million USDOL TAACCT Grant in 2012. Titled Florida TRADE, for Transforming Resources for Accelerated Degrees and Employment, the vision is to transform Florida's existing training and education system in advanced manufacturing. The Florida team began by collaborating to identify and align existing resources such as curricula and equipment from 12 institutions to build capacity and serve as a sustainable way to offer training for a range of skill levels in advanced manufacturing. The project includes providing widespread access for students to take courses online and combine their training with practical work experience through internships and hands-on training activities.

The program targets displaced workers who have lost their jobs due to foreign trade; unemployed workers; incumbent workers looking to upgrade their current skills or learn new skills; students; and veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce.

The Florida TRADE program is designed to deliver accelerated training that can be completed in three to six months, depending on the program, and leads to internships and jobs in manufacturing. As participants complete components of the program, they will be provided with the skills and opportunities to achieve nationally recognized industry certifications that will also transfer into free college credits toward an Associate of Science degree.

**Partnering with Florida Universities and Others**

VR currently has one innovation and expansion project through the University of South Florida, Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology. This project involves the use of virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities. VR recognizes grants from the US Department of Education that encourage innovative practices and expansion of services as an opportunity that could be beneficial and complementary to WIOA-related initiatives. In the upcoming year, VR will be looking for innovative opportunities that will improve employment services to and successful outcomes for individuals with "unique abilities," defined in Florida legislation as including intellectual disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorders. These opportunities, when identified, will be offered through formal procurement processes.

A common theme throughout Florida's WIOA implementation strategy is the continued alignment with potential combined planning partners and optional one-stop career center partners. Through the WIOA established interagency teams, increased coordination with these organizations and agencies will be sought.

FDBS is one such partner that maintains cooperative agreements with community rehabilitation providers and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. FDBS has a long-standing contractual relationship with its statewide Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) and values the services they provide to clients. A CRP is defined as a private, non-profit program that provides rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. CRPs provide education, independent life skills, job training, and job placement services to clients and their families who are participating in the vocational rehabilitation program.



### (C) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

The WIOA Strategy Implementation and Data Integration workgroups will continue to meet to improve and align services provided by the unified state plan programs. Statewide policies and practices can be reviewed by this team to ensure that all needs are considered and potential impacts are understood. Continuous improvement of service to individuals is paramount to the success of Florida's workforce system. Florida will work to ensure career centers are available to serve all job seekers regardless of obstacles to employment, level of need, or degree of career development.

Florida will continue to emphasize integrated service delivery in improving services to individuals. The partnership between the core programs is dedicated to developing strong strategic alliances that link employers and job seekers to services. These services include, but are not limited to, employment, training, education, human resource assistance to employers, and career and business development to further the economic growth of all Florida counties. VR has active representation on 23 of the 24 LWDBs, and is represented by FDBS on the remaining board. VR is physically collocated in 15 geographic locations, and will seek to expand collocations.

FDBS is committed to providing high quality services to people with disabilities. FDBS will continue to support individuals in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. Also, FDBS will continue to create an accountable and exemplary division workforce that ensures high quality services.

FDBS's vocational rehabilitation counselors will assist individuals in pursuing their goals as detailed in their individualized plan for employment (IPE) by using supported employment resources selected to produce the best results for the individual. FDBS vocational rehabilitation counselors will actively involve clients and families as appropriate in assessment, planning, and decision making throughout the service delivery process. Additionally, FDBS will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its job placement services and make needed improvements.

Moreover, FDBS will provide ongoing training for its staff and will review and revise policies and processes to ensure efficient services. FDBS has developed a quality assurance team who will assess the need to expand their operations. Currently, FDBS provides on-site reviews statewide with an emphasis on adherence to state policies, compliance of federal regulations, case documentation, IPE signatures, timeliness of certificate of eligibility, activities tied to the IPE, and authorization approvals. This team is responsible for being aware of all current federal and state regulations affecting the vocational rehabilitation program and also attends the Annual Quality Assurance Summit for ongoing professional staff development.



#### (D) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

CareerSource Florida will continue to focus on its *Expanding Business Engagement* initiative. Led by the Business and Workforce Development team at CareerSource Florida and its LWDB partners, this initiative is designed to encourage Florida employers to more fully utilize the state's employee recruitment, retention, and training services. Building upon early success, CareerSource Florida will continue efforts to identify and address any challenges employers note in accessing workforce services; work to enhance employer satisfaction; and measure effectiveness of employer outreach programs.

CareerSource Florida also works with the team of business-focused managers in each LWDB, typically called business liaisons, who work closely with area employers to meet their hiring and training needs. To support these efforts, Florida uses the Salesforce software platform as a customer relationship management tool to allow best-in-class management of its interactions with stakeholders. This common system enables Florida's LWDBs to work together and enhance collaborative opportunities from a business services perspective. Core program partners are engaged in conversations to explore using this system in their business outreach activities as well. Additionally, quarterly webinars are conducted with CareerSource Florida, the business liaisons and the business services managers from the core program partners to update on employer engagement and share best practices.

VR has recently formalized a Business Relations Program, with the vision to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships will lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers.

FDBS also is expanding business relationships with employers at the local level to identify and maximize competitive integrated employment opportunities and career exploration opportunities for adults and students. FDBS plans to provide ongoing training to employment staff, increase utilization of the Talent Acquisition Portal among job seekers and employers, increase utilization with the Abilities Work Web Portal at [abilitieswork.employflorida.com](http://abilitieswork.employflorida.com) and its Help Desk, develop new vocational training programs at the residential rehabilitation center; continuation of sponsorship of self-employment opportunities; sponsorship of technology training; sponsorship of academic and vocational training; encourage careers in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics to qualified individuals; and provide consultation and technical assistance to community partners and employers to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.

One current example is a pilot project in Florida of the Vermont Progressive Employment Model, designed to increase employment outcomes for hard to place FDBS clients through strong business relationships, and early and multiple work experiences for clients. The duration of the project is from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016, and is being implemented in six districts throughout the state.

Florida's goal is to increase collaboration between employer services to leverage expertise and prevent and eliminate duplication. Florida will continue to increase employer penetration and work to coordinate employers' services across WIOA program partners.

**(E) Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions****Florida Higher Education Coordinating Council**

The Florida Higher Education Coordinating Council was established to identify unmet needs and to facilitate solutions regarding the creation of new degree programs and the establishment of new institutes, campuses, or centers. Its purpose is to make recommendations to the Legislature, the State Board of Education, and the Board of Governors, State University System of Florida.

The council includes the state university system, Florida college system, representatives of the business community, and CareerSource Florida. In its 2014 Annual Report, the Higher Education Coordinating Council identified three key issues to address: (1) performance evaluation and funding of higher education institutions; (2) efficient and effective production of undergraduate degrees statewide; and (3) connecting degree and certificate production with industry talent needs.

The council's work will continue to move Florida's WIOA implementation forward by aligning partner interests with that of educational institutions. The council's recommendations will be consistent with the following guiding principles:

- To achieve within existing resources a seamless academic educational system that fosters an integrated continuum of kindergarten through graduate school education for Florida's students;
- To promote consistent education policy across all educational delivery systems, focusing on students;
- To promote substantially improved articulation across all educational delivery systems;
- To promote a system that maximizes educational access and allows the opportunity for a high quality education for all Floridians;
- To promote a system of coordinated and consistent transfer of credit and data collection for improved accountability purposes between education delivery systems.

**Blending Academics with Career and Technical Education**

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

**Collaborating with Florida's Universities and Colleges**

VR has Memoranda of Understanding with the presidents of Florida's public universities and the Florida College System. These memoranda outline the purposes, roles and responsibilities of VR and the educational institutions, as well as financial and programmatic responsibilities. The memoranda provide information regarding financial assistance, sharing of assessment findings, accommodations, rehabilitation technology services, academic advisement, counseling, confidentiality, and other topics. Additionally, FDBS plans to consult with the university system to coordinate and provide technical assistance to each other and to students and their families/guardians/surrogates, thus enabling the student's transition from high school to postsecondary activities and assimilation into the adult community. The intent of the university system agreement will be to establish a process for ensuring accessibility, support, education and training of staff related to Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

**Facilitating Postsecondary Education**

VR has an interagency agreement coordinating transition services with state education officials (FDBS, BEESS). This state-level agreement includes agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and going to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. The agencies agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives, collaborate on training and special projects, cooperate in planning and budgeting, and support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial.

Additionally, the VR Transition Youth program administrator serves as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee and works closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: the Transition Education Network. Project 10 is funded through a grant from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services within the Florida Department of Education, to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps educators, parents, students, agency representatives, and others interested in Florida's transition efforts by providing capacity building to implement secondary transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. The interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates, and employers working together to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.



#### (F) Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers

##### **Partnerships with School Districts**

VR has entered into TPCA with some local school districts. Services are not currently available in all areas of the state. TPCA and other VR Transition Youth services align with the Pre-Employment Transition Services required under WIOA. These arrangements provide community-based work experiences to eligible students who have Supported Employment (SE) service needs identified in their Individual Educational Plan and Individualized Plan for Employment. This model reimburses school districts for services provided to VR-eligible students with disabilities and facilitates a seamless transition into postsecondary employment with supports. Available statewide, On-the-Job Training through VR's contracted providers delivers needed community-based work experiences to VR-eligible students who do not require the intense supports provided through the TPCA.

##### **Leveraging Partnerships for Exceptional Education and Student Services**

FDBS and VR have entered into a MOU with the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES). This is a state-level interagency agreement charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school who are progressing to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. Parties under this agreement must meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives; collaborate on training and special projects; cooperate in planning and budgeting; and generally support any areas of work which are mutually beneficial.

##### **Florida's Eligible Training Provider List**

Utilizing DEO statewide data and LWDB data, CareerSource Florida will produce and disseminate critical labor market intelligence via a Market Intelligence Portal – a user-friendly interface – to the CareerSource Florida network, educators and training providers, and to economic development partners. This information can be used in partnership with eligible training providers to be sure the training need of Florida employers are met.

#### (G) Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

The Governor's vision in Florida for increasing training access and opportunities for individuals is anchored in state statute, requiring 50 percent of the formula funds for adults and dislocated workers to be allocated to Individual Training Accounts (ITA) unless the local board obtains a waiver from CareerSource Florida. This requirement affirms the vision of the Governor that a majority of funding must go for direct training related costs. Costs that qualify under the 50 percent rule include all customer service costs associated with the ITA program such as tuition, fees and books, and other training services. Florida allows LWDBs to establish ITA limits and durations.

LWDBs are responsible for their respective Targeted Occupations List (TOL) or utilizing the state TOL. Private postsecondary institutions must be licensed with the Commission for Independent Education. All training institutions must report student data to the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program () maintained by the Florida Department of Education.



VR is considering grant and federal demonstration projects that may be available to facilitate partnerships with educational entities to provide expanded services to job seekers with disabilities. VR also will review its current partnerships and efforts with WIOA core programs and educational entities to identify duplication of services and efforts. VR intends to identify where efforts can be combined to better support all programs.

FDBS will allocate 15 percent of its federal allotment to pre-employment transition services for all students with disabilities in need of such services who are eligible or potentially eligible for services through the Division. Services will begin and be available the year that the individual reaches age 14. The provision of such services will match categories defined in WIOA Section 113. All services and purchases (such as orientation and mobility services, pay for work experience, stipends, On-the Job Training, assistive technology services and devices, etc.) required to enable an individual to engage in activities defined in the Act will be made available as part of the 15 percent state set-aside in the federal funding formula. Individuals meeting the definition for Pre-Employment Transition Services at the time services are initiated will continue to qualify for such services through age 21 as long as these individuals are eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and/or when these persons have a disability, for purposes of section 504 of the Act.

#### (H) Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

##### **Florida Career and Professional Education Act**

Florida will continue to emphasize the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act, created by the Florida Legislature in 2007 with the intent to improve Florida's talent pipeline in order to better attract and retain targeted, high-value industries and to develop a knowledge-based economy in response to Florida's critical workforce needs. It seeks to ensure that education, industry, workforce and economic development partners in every community are collaborating to create new and meaningful opportunities for students. Rigorous and relevant curriculum opportunities are made available to both middle and high school students to earn industry certifications that are required for high-skill, high-wage jobs in Florida's target and infrastructure industries. CAPE supports local and regional economic development as well as diversification of the state economy.

The implementation of the Act requires coordination involving CareerSource Florida, the Florida Department of Education, the Department of Economic Opportunity and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The list of industry certifications is updated annually and final funding determinations are made by the Florida Department of Education.

Data reveals that students earning industry certifications have more positive student performance with higher average GPAs, lower rates of chronic absenteeism and disciplinary actions, and a lower dropout rate. Public school districts are awarded additional funding for students earning industry certifications. VR plans to provide education to staff on Career and Professional Education (CAPE) certifications, seek to increase integration of CAPE providers as VR vendors, and encourage existing VR vendors of career and technical education to pursue CAPE certification.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Youth Program**

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as High School High Tech, Project SEARCH, and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education and provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and On-the-Job Training, often lead to successful employment. For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs to serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities.

**Adult Education Integrated Education and Training Program**

Adult education programs will promote activities that increase an individual's ability to transition to postsecondary education and obtain employment. FICAPS requires that programs partner with postsecondary career and technical programs to develop and deliver an integrated education and training program. As the integrated education and training activities are developed, collaboration also will occur with the local CareerSource Florida board to determine the workforce demands for the area and ensure that the career and technical programs selected support that need. One component of FICAPS is the provision of wrap-around support services that may include transportation, child care, and other support. This will require collaboration with social agencies.

All core programs will continue to work through Florida's Employment First initiative and the Higher Education Coordinating Council to expand and develop new ways to ensure seamless articulation and accessibility to programs leading to credentials and apprenticeship opportunities.

**(I) Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies**

Florida's WIOA partners are coordinating with economic development entities in the development of a common strategic vision for Florida's workforce and economic development systems. Talent Supply and Education is one of the Six Pillars of Florida's future economy, as defined by the Florida Chamber Foundation following years of collaboration and research with business and education stakeholders including the Century Commission for a Sustainable Future; Florida Council of 100; Enterprise Florida, the state's principle economic development organization; the Florida State University System; and CareerSource Florida's predecessor, Workforce Florida, among others. The workforce development activities carried out by WIOA core programs directly support achievement of strategies under this pillar. The leaders of CareerSource Florida, Enterprise Florida and DEO work closely together to maintain a coordinated approach to advancing job creation and retention, leveraging the resources of Florida's workforce and economic development systems and cultivating collaboration and improved alignment with industry and education. State and local labor market information will inform strategy development and decisions made by the state and local workforce boards as well as WIOA core programs. Through the work of the Florida WIOA Task Force and resulting recommendations, the vice chairman of Enterprise Florida will become a member of the CareerSource Florida Board. Presently, the Chairman of the CareerSource Florida Board serves on the Enterprise Florida board. Locally, all LWDBs coordinate with economic development partners, playing a role in retention, recruitment, and organic growth.



By implementing WIOA in the spirit and intent of the law, core programs will be better integrated and aligned with Florida's strategic plan for economic development, and positioned to actively participate in statewide and local efforts towards reaching Florida's vision of becoming the global leader for talent.

## **(b) State Operating Systems and Policies**

### **(1) State Operating Systems**

#### **(A) State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State Strategies**

Florida's system infrastructure is comprised of interconnected data collections, management, and reporting systems. The first is responsible for collection management and reporting of unemployment compensation data; the second system serves as the central hub for data collection management and reporting for Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), WIOA, and state workforce/employment initiatives.

#### **(B) Data-collection and Reporting Processes**

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

One of Florida's earliest and most successful innovations in evaluation and performance tracking has been FETPIP, which was established in mid-1980 within FDOE. This program was developed mainly to help evaluate the effectiveness of postsecondary education and training programs, particularly vocational education and similar career preparation programs. The scope of the groups to be tracked rapidly expanded to cover nearly all job training and placement programs including WIOA, Wagner-Peyser (WP), Adult Education, Job Corps, Veterans, Welfare Transition (WT)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Apprenticeship, Reemployment Assistance (RA) claimants, and ex-offenders. A total of nearly 600 groups or sub-cohorts are being tracked.

FETPIP follow-up data is electronically derived from Reemployment Assistance (RA) quarterly wage records, federal military and civilian personnel records, public assistance, incarceration/parole records, and continued education rosters. Access to this data allows for annual reports with extensive detail and longitudinal capabilities. Each group is typically tracked for at least two years with many tracked over much longer periods, including all graduates (and drop-outs) of high school, certificate programs, and all levels of higher education. Quarterly reports covering employment and public assistance status and outcomes are regularly run and analyzed. For more details on FETPIP, including examples of annual outcome reports, visit <http://fldoe.org/accountability/fl-edu-training-placement-info-program/>.

FETPIP data is provided to LWDBs to enable them to evaluate the strength of training programs offered throughout the state.



## (2) State Policies

Florida will work to analyze existing workforce system policies and provide appropriate guidance and/or renovate existing policies supporting the implementation of state strategies. This analysis will be conducted in PY 2017. Links to current policy resources are below:

- CareerSource Florida Administrative Policies <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/policy-and-guidance/guidance-papers>
- CareerSource Florida Strategic Policies <http://careersourceflorida.com/initiatives/careersource-florida-policies/>
- Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual <http://www.rehabworks.org/policy.shtml>
- DBS Client Services Policies <http://dbs.myflorida.com/Legal%20Resources/Client%20Services%20Policies/index.html>
- Adult Education Assessment Technical Assistance Paper <http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/technical-assistance-papers.shtml>
- Adult High School Technical Assistance Guide
- <http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/technical-assistance-papers.shtml>

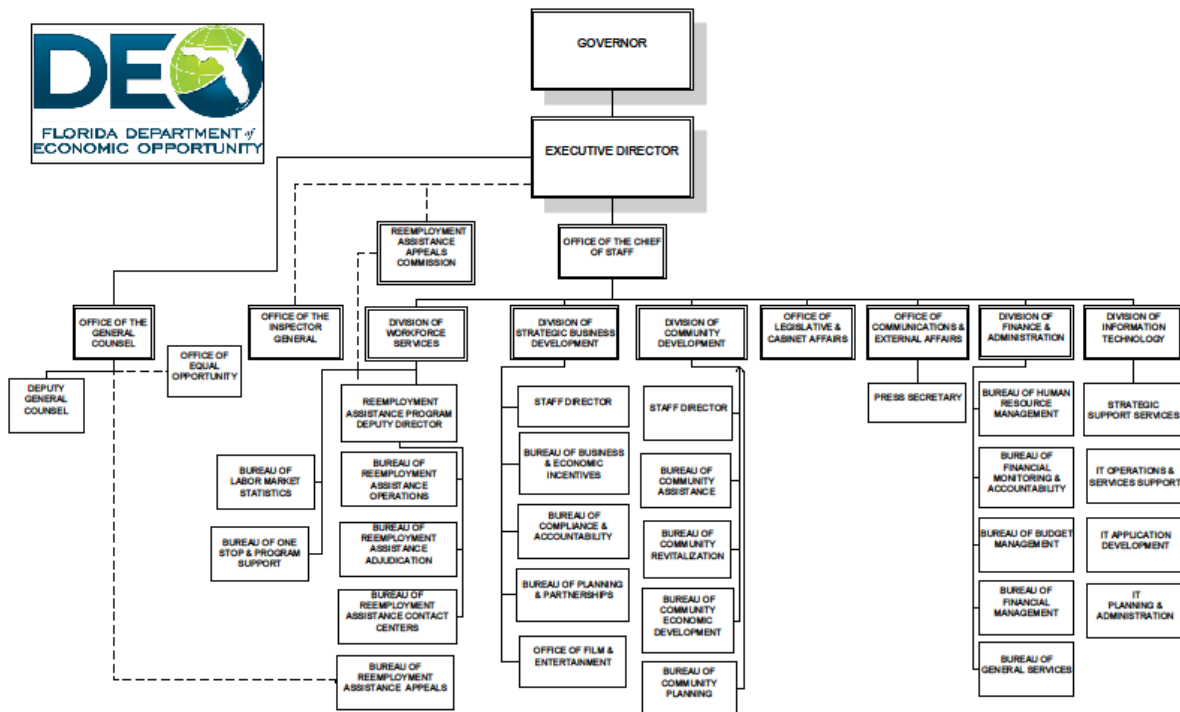
(3) **State Program and State Board Overview**

- (A) State Agency Organization. Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart

**Department of Economic Opportunity**

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is the governor's agency for workforce support and training, economic development, and community development. DEO partners with CareerSource Florida and the state's 24 Local Workforce Development boards (LWDBs) to strengthen Florida's business climate by supporting employers and helping Floridians gain employment, remain employed, and advance in their careers. DEO oversees the administration of the state's workforce system and receives and accounts for federal funds on behalf of the system. DEO is responsible for financial and performance reporting to USDOL and other federal organizations, distributing workforce guidance and policy initiatives, providing training and technical assistance to LWDBs, and providing other administrative functions. DEO also operates Florida's Reemployment Assistance program, Labor Market Statistics program, and a number of other programs and initiatives.

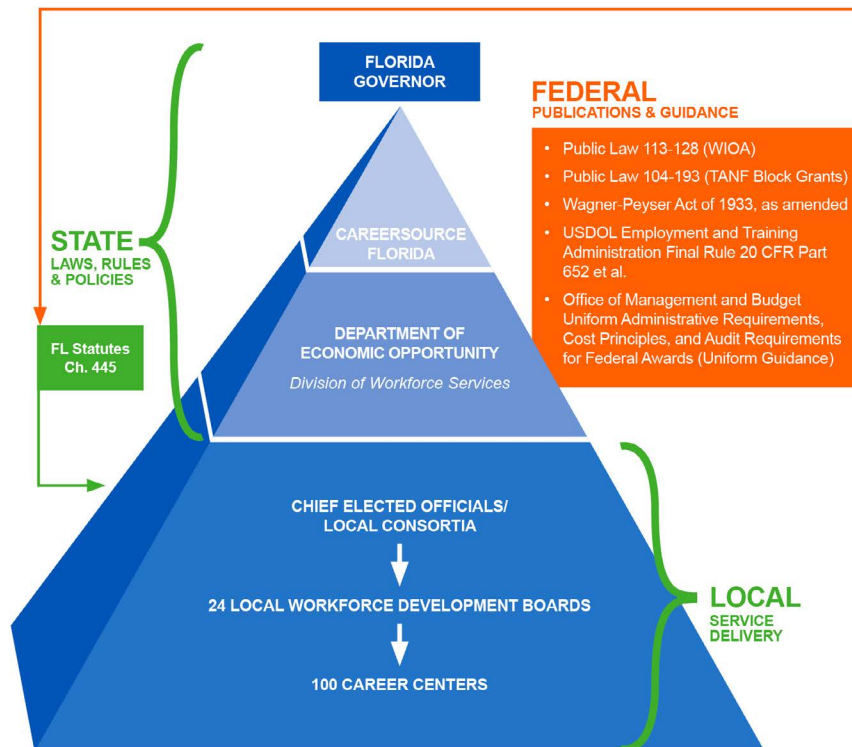
**Figure 3.02**





Administration of the state's workforce policy, programs and services is carried out by DEO and the business-led LWDBs, with an array of services delivered through nearly 100 career centers throughout Florida and through the state's online job matching system, Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM), at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com). Programmatic and administrative requirements are set forth in a Grantee-Sub-grantee Agreement executed by DEO and each LWDB requiring their compliance with all federal and state laws, regulations and any special state requirements.

**Figure 3.03**  
**Florida's Workforce System Organization**



### Florida Department of Education

The mission of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is “to increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system, by providing them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning opportunities and research valued by students, parents, and communities, and to maintain an accountability system that measures student progress.”

FDOE serves nearly 2.7 million students, 4,200 public schools, 28 colleges, 192,000 teachers, 47,000 college professors and administrators, and 321,000 full-time staff throughout the state; the department enhances the economic self-sufficiency of Floridians through programs and services geared toward college, workforce education, apprenticeships, job-specific skills, and career development. The department manages programs that assist individuals who are blind, visually-impaired, or disabled succeed either in school settings or careers - encouraging independence and self-sufficiency. FDOE provides oversight to 28 locally-governed public state colleges and 47 school district technical centers.

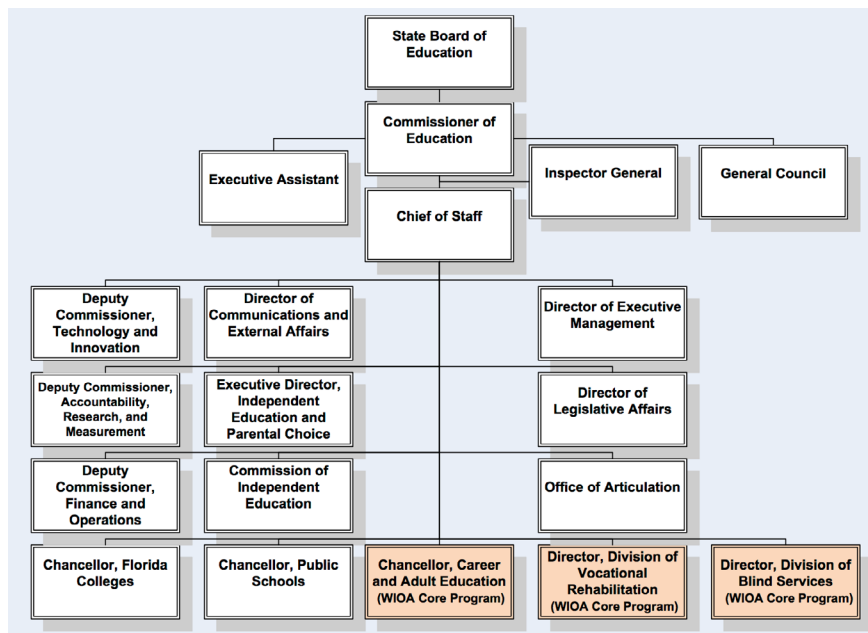


FDOE includes more than 2,400 total full-time positions, including 930 positions in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 300 positions in the Division of Blind Services and 84 positions in the Division of Career and Adult Education. The department's annual operating budget for all entities in state fiscal year 2015-16 is approximately \$22.9 billion.

The FDOE organizational and governance structure includes the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education consists of seven members appointed by the Governor to staggered four-year terms, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The State Board of Education is the chief implementing and coordinating body of public education in Florida, except for the State University System. The state board focuses on high-level policy decisions and has the authority to adopt rules to implement the provisions of law. General duties include, but are not limited to, adopting education objectives and long-range plans for public education in Florida, exercising general supervision over the Department, submitting an annual coordinated PreK-20 education budget, and adopting uniform standards of student performance.

FDOE policies and operations are led by the department's senior leadership team, consisting of the commissioner of education, chief of staff, division leaders and directors of support divisions (see organizational chart below). FDOE manages the core WIOA programs for adult and career education, vocational rehabilitation, and blind services. The senior leader team develops strategies, designs operational policies, and manages the department's business processes. Senior leader meetings are held on a weekly basis, and strategy development meetings are conducted quarterly. Strategies are tracked and adjusted as needed. Overall FDOE financial and operational performance is reported on a regularly scheduled basis to the federal Department of Education, Florida Legislature, and the office of the Governor.

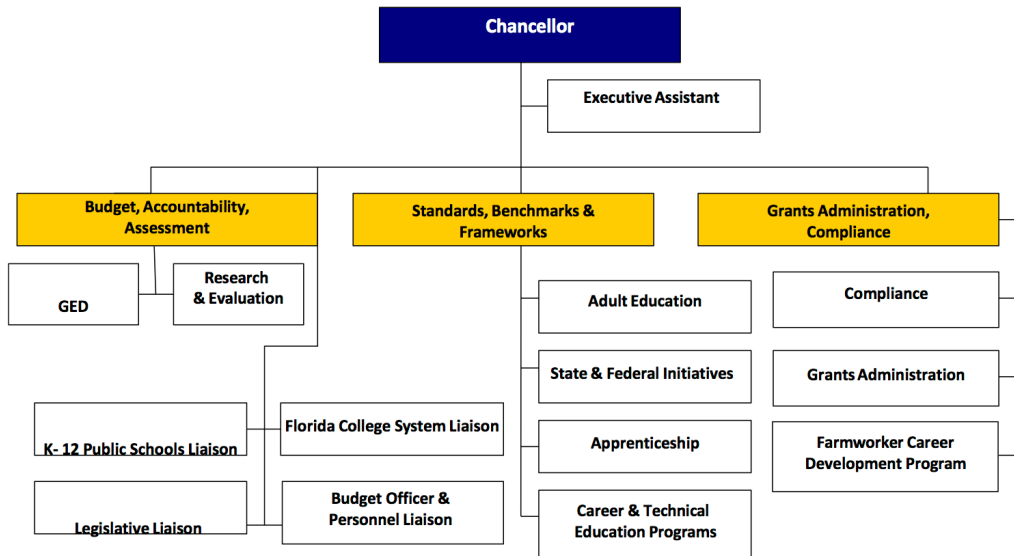
**Figure 3.04**  
**Florida Department of Education**



### Adult Education

The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) has oversight over the adult education system implemented in districts, colleges and community-based organizations and coordinates the distribution of federal adult education grants. DCAE works closely with the local programs and provides guidance on state and federal guidelines, professional development, support in reporting data, and technical assistance on program improvement plans.

**Figure 3.05**  
**Division of Career and Adult Education**



### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federally established program under the Rehabilitation Act, as Amended (1998), and reauthorized as a core program of WIOA (2014). The VR program is funded as a federal-state partnership, in which 21.3% of state general revenue matches 78.7% federal grant. Most programmatic oversight and governance is established in the federal laws and code of federal regulations. New federal regulations under WIOA are still in draft. Florida state laws for vocational rehabilitation are located in Chapter 413, Florida Statutes. VR is responsible for providing annual planning updates and annual / quarterly performance and financial reports to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). RSA conducts regulatory and programmatic monitoring and oversight activities in all VR agencies in the country approximately once every 4 years.

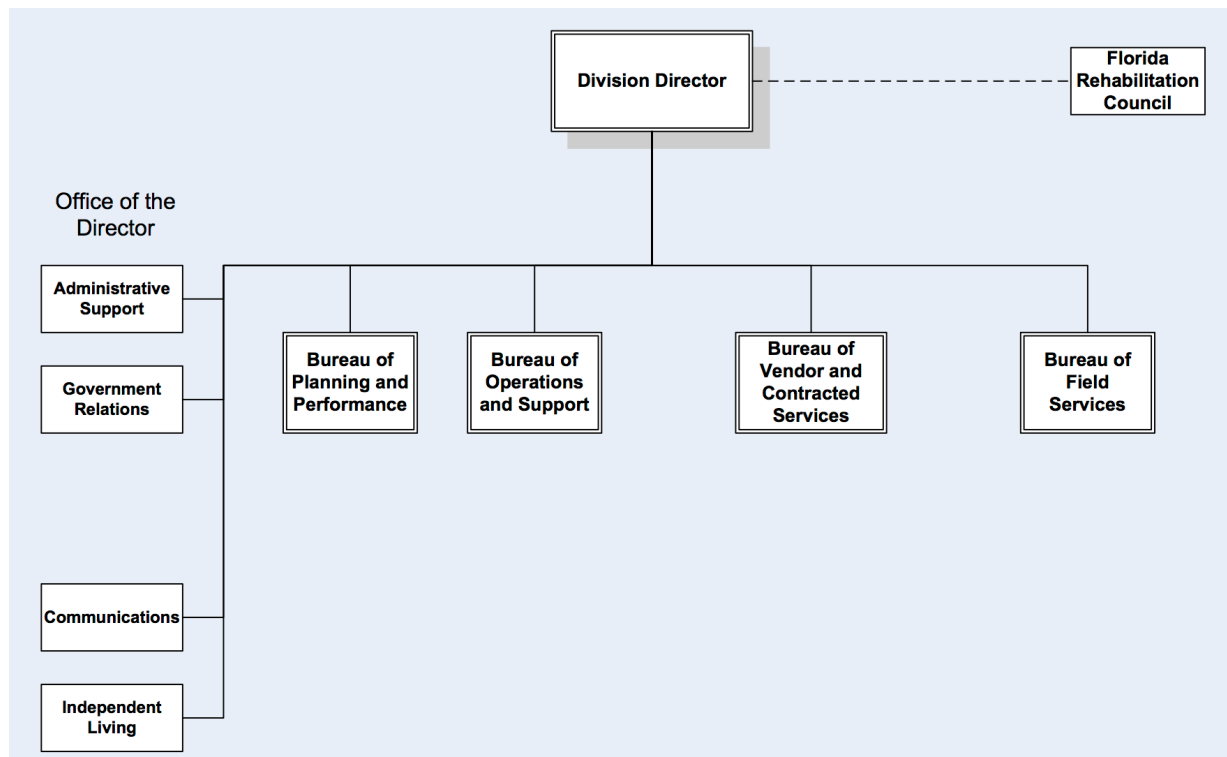
WIOA also retains the presence of a state rehabilitation council, known as the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC). Council members are volunteers and represent a variety of perspectives from the disability community. They are appointed by the governor. Although the council is not a governance board, the council is required by federal law to review, analyze, and advise VR. VR management takes council recommendations under advisement. Key collaborative activities with the council include input and recommendations for the VR services portion of the state plan, key programmatic policies, assessing VR customer satisfaction, and the progress and outcomes of administrative hearings for VR customers.



Within Florida, VR is a division of the Department of Education. Technically, VR policies and operations organizationally reside under the authority of the state board of education. However, VR historically designs operational policies, develops strategies, and operates business processes with a minimum of functional oversight of the board. The VR Director does participate in regular meetings with FDOE senior leadership, including high-level agency-wide strategic planning activities. The Director is supervised by the FDOE chief of staff, and has ready access to discuss operational activities that affect VR.

VR maintains a consistent approach for divisional governance and decision-making. The division conducts monthly senior leadership meetings to share information and determine policy direction. Division leadership also conducts monthly financial management meetings and quarterly strategic planning and information technology meetings. VR also has similar governance structures in each of its six geographic areas across the state. VR is comprised of a headquarters office, 6 area offices, and 93 offices strategically located throughout Florida where customers receive direct VR services.

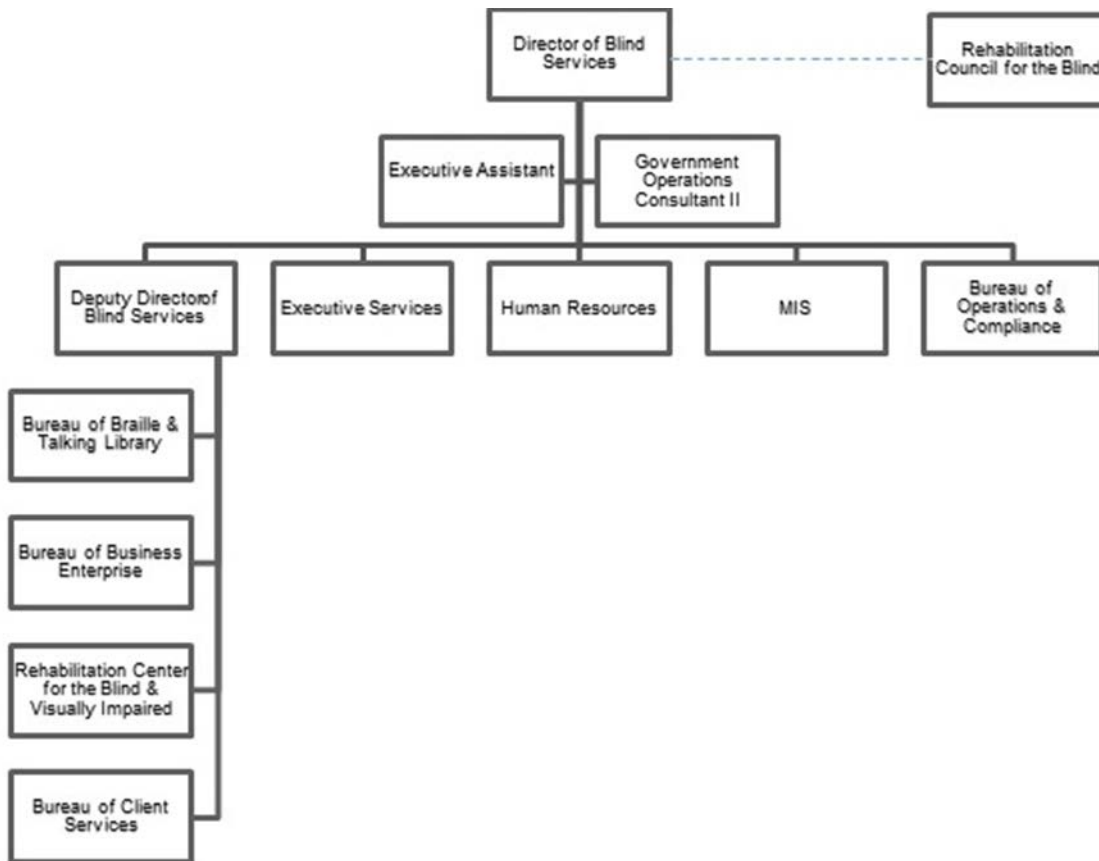
**Figure 3.06**  
**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**



**Division of Blind Services**

The Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) is a federally established program under the Rehabilitation Act, as Amended (1998), and reauthorized as a core program of WIOA (2014). The FDBS vocational rehabilitation program is funded as a federal-state partnership. FDBS is part of the Florida Department of Education and serves blind and visually impaired Floridians. Coordination of Services is administered through 15 FDBS office locations across the state utilizing a combination of state, federal and community funding. In partnership with community rehabilitation providers and other local partners, the division provides services for individuals based on their individual needs.

**Figure 3.07**  
**Division of Blind Services**



**(B) State Board****(i) Membership Roster**

The full roster of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors with their affiliations is available at [http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/08-18-15\\_Board\\_Mini\\_Bios.pdf](http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/08-18-15_Board_Mini_Bios.pdf).

**(ii) Board Activities**

CareerSource Florida Board of Directors is statutorily required to meet either in person or by teleconference four times a year. In addition, the councils meet separately, in person or by teleconference, as scheduled and/or at the request of the Council Chairman. The council and full board meetings provide opportunities for the Board of Directors to address issues impacting the state network, guide and create policy to provide strategic planning and oversee funding initiatives.

By law, CareerSource Florida is the statewide Workforce Investment Board charged with policy setting and oversight of the workforce system. State statute defines CareerSource Florida's purpose as one of designing and implementing strategies that help Floridians enter, remain and advance in the workplace. The board and council meetings provide the opportunities to achieve these goals. For further information on the roles of each council and the executive committee refer to the charters attached. In addition, the meeting calendar is on the CareerSource Florida website at <http://careersourceflorida.com/events/>.

**(4) Assessment of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners****(A) Assessment of Core Programs**

Core programs will be assessed each year based upon actual performance relative to negotiated levels of performance at both the state and local areas. Utilizing the Statistical Adjustment Model, negotiations will be conducted with each LWDB annually. Each quarter, performance will be evaluated and, if necessary, technical assistance will be provided in any areas of concern. In addition, periodic training sessions will be provided to examine promising practices and discuss opportunities for continuous improvement.

**(B) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs**

Florida's WIOA core program partners will continue to work through a WIOA Interagency Measurement and Performance Reporting Workgroup to identify and compare federal WIOA measurement and reporting requirements with current federal performance measures and reporting requirements for core partners, and to develop a high-level proposal regarding collection, management, and reporting of future performance data. CareerSource Florida and DEO participates in the workgroup, providing analyses of existing measures with comparisons of WIOA indicators of performance. The analyses resulted in an inventory of WIOA data elements by program. This included the Department of Economic Development's submission of workforce data to the Department of Education, FETPIP.

Information technology data collection and reporting systems within each core partner will continue to be examined to establish an integrated systems approach for statewide data collection, reporting and validation. The measurement and reporting workgroup has designed a reporting flow process which identifies how data is collected, compiled, integrated, evaluated, and further reported to USDOL and USDOE. This process takes into consideration statutory requirements of individual programs, as well as business requirements that govern the collection and submittal of performance data.



Performance assessments will be conducted on a quarterly and annual basis through the core partners' submission of data to FETPIP for data validation and compliance with WIOA requirements and subsequent reporting to USDOL and USDOE. DEO will continue to conduct statewide workforce performance assessments working closely with the Interagency Measurement and Performance Reporting Workgroup for enhanced data collection and reporting.

### (C) Previous Assessment Results

#### Department of Economic Opportunity

DEO conducted a 2-year data analysis of workforce system performance within the state's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Common Measures. This analysis was compared with future WIOA indicators of performance.

#### **Accountability and Continuous Improvement**

Florida workforce law expressly calls for increased accountability for the workforce system for the state, localities and training providers. Florida has several methods for continually monitoring performance that has great value as both real-time management tools as well as tools for continuous improvement.

**Performance Indicators:** Section 136 of WIA identifies indicators of performance for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. These measures are below:

**Figure 3.08**  
**Florida Common Measures Goals**  
**PY 2014-2015**

Adult Measures	PY 2014-2015 Goals
Entered Employment Rate	82.0%
Employment Retention Rate	92.0%
Average Six Months Earnings	\$20,000
<b>Dislocated Worker Measures</b>	
Entered Employment Rate	90.0%
Employment Retention Rate	91.2%
Average Six Months Earnings	\$17,621
<b>Youth Common Measures</b>	
Placement in Employment or Education	60.0%
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	75.5%
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	53.1%
<b>Wagner-Peyser Measures</b>	
Entered Employment Rate	61.0%
Employment Retention Rate	85.0%
Average Six Months Earnings	\$13,598



**Levels of Service:** Total participants served during the PY decreased by 3.3 percent for Adults, 23.3 percent for Dislocated Workers, 11.0 percent for Older Youth and 8.7 percent for Younger Youth. The chart below presents the total number of participants and exiters leaving the WIA program during PY 2014-2015.

**Figure 3.9**  
**2015-2015 WIA Participants/Exiters**

WIA Program	Total Participants Served	Total Exiters
Adults	28,495	14,937
Dislocated Workers	11,093	6,019
Older Youth	5,171	2,172
Younger Youth	9,216	3,029

#### **WIA Performance Measures**

Data on core measures and Common Measures is collected from Florida's Management Information System (MIS), Reemployment Assistance (RA) Wage Records, and from the Wage Record Information System (WRIS). The MIS system gathers exit information on participants and covers the real-time data elements referenced above. Reemployment Assistance (RA) Wage records contain information such as wage and retention information after exit. The WRIS system is a database consisting of several participating states' records for wages and employment, etc. WRIS records supplement Florida's RA data to provide a more complete picture of participant outcomes.

The chart below displays Florida's negotiated rate for each of the required Common Measures along with the actual statewide outcomes achieved. Pursuant to federal policy, states achieving at least 80 percent of the negotiated goal are considered to have met the goal. The 80 percent criterion is shown in parentheses.



**Figure 3.10**  
**State WIA Statewide Common Measures of Performance**  
**PY 2014-2015**

WIA CORE MEASURE	NEGOTIATED GOAL (80% of Goal)	ACTUAL PERFORMANCE	DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO 80% of Goal
Adult Entered Employment Rate	82.0% (65.6%)	81.3%	+15.7%
Adult Employment Retention Rate	92.0% (73.6%)	93.2%	+19.6%
Adult Average Earnings	\$20,000 (\$16,000)	\$18,875	+\$2,875
Dislocated Worker Entered Employment Rate	90.0% (72.0%)	85.6%	+13.6%
Dislocated Worker Employment Retention Rate	91.2% (73.0%)	91.1%	+18.1%
Dislocated Worker Average Earnings	\$17,621 (\$14,097)	\$16,612	+\$2,515
Youth Placement in Employment or Education	60.0% (48.0%)	71.9%	+23.9
Youth Attainment of Degree or Certificate	75.5% (60.4%)	75.9%	+15.5%
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	53.1 (42.5%)	55.0%	+12.5%

As the above table indicates, Florida's PY 2014-2015 performance met or exceeded the federal criterion of 80 percent of goal for each of the negotiated Common Measures. Compared with PY 2013-2014 outcomes, PY 2014 - 2015 results remained consistent.



### Local Performance

Expected levels of performance or goals were agreed upon for each LWDB. The chart below summarizes outcomes based on these goals and the previous federal 80 percent criterion.

**Figure 3.11**  
**Local Workforce Development Board WIA Performance**  
**Program Year 2014-2015**

WIA COMMON MEASURE	STATE GOAL	# OF LWDBs ACHIEVING GOAL	% OF LWDBs ACHIEVING GOAL
Adult Entered Employment Rate	82.0%	22 of 24	91.7%
Adult Employment Retention Rate	92.0%	24 of 24	100%
Adult Average Earnings	\$20,000	22 of 24	91.7%
Dislocated Worker Entered Employment Rate	90.0%	22 of 24	91.7%
Dislocated Worker Employment Retention Rate	91.2%	23 of 24	95.8%
Dislocated Worker Average Earnings	\$17,621	23 of 24	95.8%
Youth Placement In Employment Or Education	60.0%	23 of 24	95.8%
Youth Attainment Of Degree Or Certificate	75.5%	20 of 24	83.3%
Youth Literacy Or Numeracy Gains	53.1%	18 of 24	75.0%

\*Based on United States Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter 25-13, May 15, 2014, “Fails” is defined as the number of performance measures less than 80 percent of the negotiated goal. “Meets” is defined as the number of performance measures between 80 percent – 100 percent of the negotiated goal. “Exceeds” is defined as the number of performance measures above 100 percent of the negotiated goal.

### Customer Satisfaction Surveys

At the direction of, and in consultation with, CareerSource Florida, DEO earlier contracted with a vendor to evaluate Florida’s customer satisfaction survey processes and to develop a new protocol for assessing customer satisfaction by job seekers and businesses utilizing the services of Florida’s workforce system, i.e., career centers. A Customer Satisfaction Team comprising of representatives from the CareerSource Florida network and DEO was established to provide input and engagement throughout the evaluation process. The final report summarized the customer satisfaction processes formerly used by the state and recommended new processes and methodologies to better refine and more accurately capture true customer satisfaction by job seekers and employers. Florida plans to further refine some of the recommended protocols and to design and implement a new customer satisfaction survey process to capture customer satisfaction metrics for those who use the workforce system.



Florida plans to integrate customer satisfaction surveys as a component of its workforce management system, Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM). DEO will be working with the vendor to ensure its survey protocol, processes, and methodology meet the requirements outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 12-12.

Customer satisfaction survey results will be invaluable to the state as it continues to identify and refine strategies that can be implemented to better serve its workforce services customers.

#### ***Local Workforce Development Board Performance Reviews***

Section 445.007(3), Florida Statutes, directs DEO, under CareerSource Florida's direction, to meet annually with each LWDB to review performance and certify they are in compliance with state and federal laws.

During PY 2014-2015, DEO staff presented performance findings to each local workforce board. The presentations included information on the local board's program and financial performance. The annual presentations provide a unique opportunity for dialogue with local board members and offer them a better understanding of state and federal performance requirements and their local board's performance outcomes.

#### ***State Performance Improvement Plan Policy***

Florida's approach also provides for consequences in situations where there is a pattern of low performance. Typically, low-performing local workforce boards are required to first develop and implement their own Corrective Action Plans. If low performance persists, state-level staff work with local workforce board staff to design a state-approved performance improvement plan policy with specific deliverables, often supported by state and peer Technical Assistance and Training (TAT) and sometimes supplemental funding for specific interventions. Continued chronic performance and operational problems can result in progressive levels of direct, sustained on-site oversight by state staff or state-designated local workforce board peer supervision, receivership, or replacement of local executive staff. As an ultimate sanction, a local board may be re-designated or consolidated due to performance problems; to date, no local board has been sanctioned in this manner.



### ***Division of Vocational Rehabilitation***

VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to identify and close inactive cases, after diligent efforts to locate and/or reengage customers. Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR is beginning to see the anticipated shift in the ratio of successful closures to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased number and percentage of employment outcomes, as previously measured by Federal Performance Indicator 1.1 and 1.2.

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

- Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA.

**Figure 3.12**  
**Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Performance Indicators and Targets**

<b>Federal Performance Indicators and Targets</b>	<b>Actual Performance (FFY 15)</b>	<b>Previous Year (FFY 14)</b>
<b>Indicator 1.1:</b> Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	-2,177	+437
<b>Indicator 1.2:</b> Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	37.4%	29.82%
<b>Indicator 1.3:</b> Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	99%	99.67%
<b>Indicator 1.4:</b> Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	99.1%	97.53%
<b>Indicator 1.5:</b> Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	54%	51.67%
<b>Indicator 1.6:</b> Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	65.3%	66.2%
<b>Indicator 2.1:</b> Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	98%	98%

***Division of Blind Services***

FDBS contracted with Mississippi State University to conduct a needs assessment. The assessment revealed the following areas of need related to the workforce system:

1. Develop and strengthen greater employer relationships.
2. Expand services to Hispanic/Latino, African American, American Indian and other populations that identify themselves as multiple races.
3. Improve assistive technology services such as standardizing curriculum, making an effort to stay up-to-date on the most in-demand technology and job skills, and reworking trainings to make them more frequent and/or in-depth.
4. Increase outreach and community visibility.
5. Assist clients in identifying transportation resources to become and/or remain employed.
6. Engage with CRPs to maximize outcomes for consumers.
7. Regular follow-up with consumers.

Based upon the results of the needs assessment, FDBS has developed strategies to address the identified needs that are incorporated and described throughout this plan.

See FDBS section X(j) for further details.

**Adult Education**

State targets are negotiated with the US Department of Education, Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) and established for each of the educational functioning levels for ABE, Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and ESOL on an annual basis. The target percentage is based upon prior program year performance and a comparison of the state with national averages. The percentages represent the portion of students that must meet the goal for each educational functioning level. The same targets are required of programs receiving a federal grant and the target must be met (90% of each EFL) or show improvement. If these conditions aren't met, the program will be required to submit a program improvement plan. Technical assistance and training is provided. The chart below shows the target and performance for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The data for 2014-2015 is not available at this time.

**Figure 3.13**  
**Florida Adult Education State Targets**  
**Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education**

Measure	2012-13 Target	2012-13 Performance	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Performance	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Performance
ABE Beginning Literacy	41%	35%	34%	32%	39%	Not available
ABE Beginning	44%	43%	44%	39%	45%	Not available
ABE Low Intermediate	43%	*49%	47%	45%	51%	Not available
ABE High Intermediate	45%	*52%	50%	49%	54%	Not available
ASE Low	53%	*56%	55%	54%	58%	Not available



**Figure 3.14**  
**Florida Adult Education State Targets**  
**English for Speakers of Other Languages**

Measure	2012-13 Target	2012-13 Performance	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Performance	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Performance
ESL Beginning Literacy	47%	42%	46%	39%	48%	Not available
ESL Low Beginning	46%	44%	41%	43%	49%	Not available
ESL High Beginning	45%	41%	39%	39%	47%	Not available
ESL Low Intermediate	41%	36%	36%	33%	42%	Not available
ESL High Intermediate	40%	33%	35%	31%	38%	Not available
ESL Advanced	26%	20%	31%	27%	30%	Not available

**(D) Evaluations and Research Projects**

Selected research and improvement projects will be aligned to strategies in this plan and monitored by the core program planning workgroup. To select projects, the core program partners will utilize the working group flow discussed in section IV to recommend areas for analysis or improvements. These projects would be approved by the leadership of the core program partner agencies and coordinated with the Secretaries of the Departments of Labor and Education.

**(5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs**

**(A) State's Methods and Factors Used to Distribute Funds to Local Areas for —**

**(i) Youth Activities in Accordance With WIOA Section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)**

Seventy percent of the total regional allocation is based on the required allocation factors of the relative number of unemployed individuals in an area of substantial unemployment, the relative number of unemployed individuals that exceed 6.5 percent of the civilian labor force in that workforce region, and the relative number of economically disadvantaged in the workforce region. The state board approved the application of the maximum allowable factor of 30 percent to the adult and youth regional calculations based on the relative excess poverty levels within the 24 local areas. Excess poverty is defined as the number of economically disadvantaged (adult or youth) in excess of 1.25 percent of the civilian labor force within the workforce region.



- (ii) Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

- (iii) Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned

Florida uses the following four factors (with relative weight of each factor noted) in determining allocation percentages used to distribute Dislocated Worker funding to the 24 LWDBs:

**Figure 3.15**  
**Distribution of Dislocated Worker Funding Percentages**

Factor	Weight
12-month average of reemployment assistance claimants	20%
12-month average of unemployed individuals	25%
Mass Layoff Statistics (number of initial claims)	25%
Long-Term Unemployed (12-month average unemployment compensation Final Payments)	30%

Note: All of the factors are based on the most recent calendar year data available.

For each of these four factors, relative percentages are calculated for each LWDB, weights are then applied, with the resulting amounts combined to determine the full 100 percent factor for each Regional Workforce Board.

Funds not distributed using these formula factors are reserved at the state level for discretionary awards to address specific dislocation events and operate the state's rapid response unit.

(B) For Title II:

- (i) Awarding multi-year grants on contracts to eligible providers

In accordance with Section 231 under Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act of WIOA, the DCAE will provide funding to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services through a continuation process for 2016-2017 and a competitive process for 2017-2018. This will include awarded grant projects funded under Section 225 - Corrections and Other Institutionalized.



A competition will be conducted in the early spring of 2017. DCAE will identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state. An eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities that may include a/an:

- local education agency;
- community-based or faith-based organization;
- volunteer literacy organization;
- institution of higher education;
- public or private nonprofit agency;
- library; a public housing authority;
- nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
- consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; and
- partnerships between an employer and an entity described above.

In the grant and contract awarding process, the required thirteen (13) considerations identified in Section 231 will be included in the evaluation and selection process. In addition, other factors that will be considered include: the ability of the eligible provider to meet the literacy needs of the area, the ability to comply with WIOA expectations, the past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals, and the overall qualifications and expertise of the provider's personnel.

Also as a part of the grant application awarding process, Florida will continue to incorporate integrated education and training services, which provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation and occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

#### (ii) Direct and equitable access to all eligible providers

In the competition year, DCAE will ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants and contracts. The Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement will be distributed via various communication outlets, such as (but not limited to): Florida Department of Education (FDOE) communication system, regional, and local newspapers, formal press release, announcement on the FDOE website, major statewide educational publications, radio, and television stations in order to ensure that all prospective eligible providers will have access to the same standardized information. An annual webinar will be conducted to review the grant application process and facilitate any questions from prospective eligible providers. Grant application procedures will be the same for all eligible providers.

#### (C) Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

In Florida, vocational rehabilitation services are delivered by 2 agencies- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Division of Blind Services (FDBS). Based on a mutual letter of understanding, Florida's federal grant funding for vocational rehabilitation services is allocated as follows: 83% of grant funding is allocated to VR and 17% of grant funding is allocated to FDBS.



## (6) Program Data

### (A) Data Alignment and Integration

#### (i) Interoperable Management Information System

The partner agencies convened a data workgroup to learn about the systems used by each and to identify actions needed in order to comply with data collection and reporting requirements for WIOA. During these meetings, it was discovered that most of the state systems use the same database platforms or platforms between partner agencies were highly extensible and interoperable. Florida plans to use a federated model with key systems interacting in intervals of real-time daily, monthly, and quarterly. This allows minimal interruption of the data collection, management, and reporting practices of each core and sub-entities involved within the partner agencies. While systems that provide required data will remain unchanged, this federated model still ensures effective, low-cost data collection with the ability to produce the unified reports required by WIOA. In addition, the state already possesses a statewide workforce analytics system that is accessible by state workforce practitioners and public stakeholders.

#### (ii) State's Plans to Integrate Data Systems

Streamlined intake will take place at the LWDB level as opposed to the system level. However, when intake data is captured by any of the partner agencies, and is necessary for the reporting and performance of other partner programs, these agencies will contribute to a central repository system either in real-time or via system interface.

#### (iii) Aligning Technology and Data Systems Across Mandatory One-Stop Partner Programs

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

#### (iv) State's Plans To Develop And Produce The Reports Required Under WIOA Section 116

The state's current infrastructure and proposed infrastructure is positioned to meet the reporting requirements. Through collaboration with the vendor of Florida's online job matching system career center, the necessary data files are configured on a quarterly basis for federal reporting and submitted through the Enterprise Data Reporting Validation System. Prior to submission, these files are analyzed for data consistency and vetted utilizing internal queries and tracking reports. All reports are reviewed and approved by both DEO and CareerSource Florida staff prior to being certified.



#### **(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success**

CareerSource Florida and the DEO will design and build a Performance Funding Model based on performance concepts identified by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors with related metrics identified by the local workforce boards (LWDBs). The Performance Funding Model will provide the CareerSource Florida network with a customized, long-term performance funding mechanism to identify and measure network performance and reward local boards for meeting performance targets, for demonstrating continuous improvement and for achieving excellence.

Utilizing DEO statewide data and LWDB data, CareerSource Florida will produce and disseminate critical labor market intelligence via a Market Intelligence Portal – a user-friendly interface – to the CareerSource Florida network, educators and training providers, and to economic development partners. Indicators of performance will also be provided through CareerSource Florida sector initiatives, local board pilot projects, and statewide higher education data to support market-informed decision-making and enable statewide policy development.

#### **(C) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data**

Pursuant to section 1008.39, Florida Statutes, FETPIP is mandated to provide outcome reporting on workforce and education programs within the state. The primary mechanism employed by FETPIP is UI and WRIS wage record data. All core partners currently report participant data to FETPIP and will continue to do so under WIOA. As a result, Florida UI wage information will be made available, as the law allows, to the core partners for employment and wage-related outcome identification for federal performance standards. With the use wage record data, performance accountability and program evaluations for all core programs will be conducting in a similar manner.

#### **(D) Privacy Safeguards**

All core partners will agree to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to confidential information. Each partner will ensure that the collection and use of any information that contains personally identifiable information will be limited to purposes that support their programs and activities.

### **(7) Priority of Service for Veterans**

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has issued regulations implementing priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses, as provided by the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), and as specified by the Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006. JVA calls for priority of service to be implemented by all "qualified job training programs," defined as "any workforce preparation, development or delivery program or service that is directly funded, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor." Since enactment of JVA in 2002, priority of service has been implemented under policy guidance issued by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). The purpose of these regulations is to further articulate how priority of service is to be applied across all new and existing qualified job training programs.

**Key Definitions**

- *Covered person* – The regulations adopt and apply this statutory term, which includes *eligible spouses*.
- *Veteran* – The regulations specify that the definition for *veteran* specified at 38 U.S.C. 101(2) applies across all qualified job training programs for the purpose of priority of service.

That definition includes two key criteria:

- Service in the active military, naval, or air service
- Discharge under conditions other than dishonorable

Eligible veterans and covered persons identified at the *point of entry* shall be notified of programs and/or services available. Point of entry includes physical locations, such as CareerSource Florida career centers, as well as web sites and other virtual service delivery resources.

LWDBs will ensure strategic plan provides clear strategies and policies for providing veterans and covered persons with the highest quality of service at every phase of services offered. Policies shall be implemented to ensure that eligible veterans and eligible spouses are aware of:

- Their entitlement to priority of service
- The full array of programs and services available to them
- Any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services

Priority of Service means the right of eligible veterans and covered persons to take precedence over eligible non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under new or existing qualified job training programs, furthermore; the eligible veterans or covered persons shall receive access to the service or resources earlier in time than the non-covered person. If the service or resource is limited, the veteran or covered persons receives access to the service or resource instead of or before the non-covered person. Services can range from basic functions of the CareerSource Florida system, such as assistance with job search and identification of needed skills, to more customized initiatives such as creating career pathways, with corresponding competency assessments and training opportunities.

To accommodate Priority of Service at point of entry, Geographic Solutions has implemented changes to the EFM to accommodate changes in the Priority of Service to veterans. A “pop-up” targets newly registering veterans and covered persons. The purpose of this pop-up is to ensure newly registered veterans and covered persons are aware of their entitlement to priority of services and the types of services available under priority of service.

**Monitoring Priority of Service**

A veteran's self-registration will automatically record service code 089, "Notification of Veterans Priority of Service." A manual service code 189 will be used when the "Notification of Veteran Priority of Service" is given as a staff-assisted service. Veterans and covered persons who register in EFM or who are being entered into EFM by staff will be advised of their entitlement to priority of services and the code 189 will be entered on the service plan screen in EFM. The 089 and 189 service plan codes will serve as a priority of service indicator in conjunction with periodic state, regional and local level program reviews to ensure compliance with priority of service. Additional monitoring guidance from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is forthcoming in accordance with 20 CFR Part 1010, Priority of Service for covered persons' final rule.

Eligible veterans and covered persons will also receive priority in all U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) programs funded in whole or in part operating in the CareerSource Florida career center.

**Programs include but are not limited to:**

- WIOA Adult
- WIOA Dislocated Worker
- National Emergency Grants (NEG)
- Wagner-Peyser State Grants
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program

**Additional programs may include:**

- WIOA Youth Program
- Community-Based Job Funding Grants
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program (MSFW)
- Indian and Native American Program
- H-1B Technical Skills Training Grants
- Office of Disability Employment Programs
- Labor Market Information Formula Grants
- Pilots and Demonstration Grants
- Research and Development
- Other Internet based tools operated by (USDOL) grantees

**Other examples of Priority of Services for veterans include the following:**

- Referral of qualified veterans to new job openings, especially federal contractor job orders, prior to all non-veteran job referral activity
- Job fairs for veterans, or having the first few hours be for veterans alone

**Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE)**

Florida's Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) refocusing is a joint partnership between DEO and the Department of Labor (DOL)/Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) established to best meet the employment needs of veterans and eligible persons at CareerSource Florida centers throughout the state. Frontline/WP/WIOA staff focus on providing core services and initial assessment to veterans seeking employment assistance (majority of veterans will be served by Frontline/WP/WIOA staff).

DVOP specialists provide intensive services to veterans with identified SBE(s) and do not provide services to any other population. They may also determine potential SBE population using VETS ETA9002/VET200 reports.

Local Veterans' Employment Representative LVER staff conduct employer outreach and job development in the local community, on behalf of all CareerSource Florida centers' veterans, including working directly with the DVOPs with case managed veterans with SBE(s)

As a veteran enters the career center, they are identified and asked to complete the veterans' initial intake questionnaire. They are directed to the first available career center staff with their completed initial intake form.

They are notified of Veterans Priority of Service (POS) and their intake questionnaire is reviewed, a complete initial assessment is conducted. They are only referred to a DVOP specialist if an SBE is identified during the initial assessment. The identified SBE(s) is documented in the case notes prior to referral.

The DVOP will first complete an objective assessment then proceed as appropriate for each individual veteran job seeker.

**(8) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities**

The DEO was one of the original recipients of the Department of Labor's Disability Program Navigator (DPN) grant in 2002, and has continued to expand services to persons with disabilities within CareerSource Florida centers throughout the state. The DPN grant focused on developing relationships across agency and entity lines to leverage resources and enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and was a catalyst to:

- Expand opportunities to increase staff awareness of the variety of assistive technologies and services available
- Provide technical assistance and training on working with persons with varying disabilities
- Assure that the CareerSource centers were readily accessible.

After the U.S. Department of Labor's DPN ended, CareerSource Florida awarded state-level funding to LWDBs to support the accomplishments of the DPN grant and assist the local areas with staffing, purchasing of assistive technology and services, and modifications to workstations and offices to better accommodate persons with disabilities. The CareerSource center system has expanded the range of local partners who provide supplemental services to maximize the success of persons with disabilities in the workplace.



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

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

**At the state level, the workforce system has increased its active participation on boards that work to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities such as:**

- Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)
- Florida Developmental Disability Council led Employment First Initiative and their Employment and Transportation Task Force,
- Community Services Block Grant Advisory Council
- Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) also has representation within the workforce system and several members of the Statewide Strengthening Youth Partnership are entities that focus their services to persons with disabilities.

VR has been a partner in the CareerSource Florida network since the inception of WIA. Many other state and local entities also provide resources that help to maximize employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These partners enhance the services that career centers offer their customers and provide those supports that the workforce system cannot. Together partners and the workforce system are able to offer comprehensive services for job seekers that offer the opportunity for self-sufficiency through meaningful employment.

November of 2014 saw the launch of the Abilities Work web portal within the state MIS, EFM. The portal was in response to the recommendation made by the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities for a single point of contact for employers who would like to hire an individual with a disability and need guidance and information. The portal was developed by DEO in partnership with VR, FDBS, APD, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and stakeholders from around the state. The portal's Help Desk is operated by VR staff who provide staff with specialized knowledge in disability resources and can guide job seekers and employers as they navigate the employment system. Together with these partners DEO continues to monitor and make improvements to the portal in response to suggestions from users and the staff's own experiences.



The resources described above provide a strong foundation for accessibility in the CareerSource Florida Network service delivery system. To support and strengthen existing resources, DEO's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) conducts regular on-site and desktop reviews of each LWDB's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, and 29 CFR Parts 32 and 37. LWDBs, in turn, are required to conduct self-audits and participant data analysis to monitor their own compliance with the ADA annually. The primary compliance criteria are contained in Florida's Methods of Administration, as required by federal equal opportunity regulations. Additionally, in order to obtain meaningful information regarding the level of service to individuals with disabilities, OCR may conduct the following reviews:

- Staff interviews
- Customer surveys and interviews
- Facility accessibility survey review and assessment
- Review of customer informational materials, including materials in alternative formats and languages other than English
- Review of community contact programs
- Observation of center activities
- Complaint file review
- Discussion of intake and assessment processes, including provisions to serve individuals with disabilities or who are non-English speaking
- Review of compliance monitoring reports prepared by or on behalf of the LWDB
- Review of program and equipment available

OCR provides ongoing technical assistance to LWDB/career center staff regarding such topics as reasonable accommodation requests from customers and employees. Based on these technical assistance requests and its reviews of LWDBs' compliance with ADA requirements, OCR intends to provide formal training onsite or via webinars on critical topics.

In 2013, VR introduced a strategic initiative to ensure accessibility of all agency components- its programs, facilities, personnel and hiring practices, online resources, internal and external communications, and technology systems. This goal has been successfully completed and its strategies are now built into VR operational procedures. FDOE Leasing staff conducts ADA inspections (following ADA Title II requirements) of all new or renewed VR office leases. VR offices that are inspected and found not in compliance have in place a 504 Plan, which describes accessibility improvements planned for the facility. VR customers are included in this process when possible. VR employees in every area have completed ADA Coordinator certification training. Hearing loops and other adaptive equipment and/or software is available in VR facilities, and specific applications have been developed using custom JAWS script and workflow documentation to meet the needs of users. VR employees are required to complete ADA informational training.



**Additional VR internal strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows.**

- Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid info, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security / building access policy at HQ.
- Continue to use interpreters and translators and VR's online resources, as well as the websites of other partners and stakeholders (where permitted), to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
- Offer expanded access to services, and make sure that materials and other program information are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics, and other settings.
- Continue to assign counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing, transition students, mental health customers, and brain and spinal cord injury customers.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other career center partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with intent to include universal design as a separate component of the One-stop career center certification process.

**(9) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency**

Florida's adult education programs offer Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction for adults to improve their English speaking and writing skills but also to improve their academic skills so that they can earn a high school credential and enter postsecondary education to improve their career options. Florida's one-stop career center partners will collaborate to provide services, resources and referrals to limited English speaking jobseekers.



## IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

### **Florida Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Implementation Team**

Parallel to the work of the Florida WIOA Task Force Discussed in section (II)(c)(2) above, a WIOA Interagency Implementation Team was created that includes professional team members from all core programs. This team has met monthly and initially was an opportunity to learn more about each core program, its structure, purpose and customer base, and what they could contribute to the statewide system. This work has been beneficial in setting the stage for program alignment and identifying gaps. Once the teams' understanding of each program deepened, the focus turned to identifying how the major components of WIOA would be implemented. This led to the formation of workgroups for the measurement/ performance accountability (data) component and the strategic planning/ statewide plan development (planning) component. Additional workgroups may be formed as needed to address implementation of other WIOA components.

The workgroups have taken the same process-driven approach as the interagency team; each developed a workgroup charter and mission, a process flowchart, a timeline for deliverables, requirements matrices and other management documents. Meetings are managed using detailed agendas with meeting minutes and action items, and workgroup documents are stored in a secure Sharefile drive that is accessible to everyone on the Interagency Team. Forming workgroups specific to major WIOA components was beneficial in providing an opportunity for agency subject matter experts to collaborate outside of the Interagency Team meetings to discuss specific details and requirements and actually plan, then report back to the entire team with a progress update or decision points. Any decision points, recommendations or progress updates from the workgroups are vetted through the Interagency Team and Core Program Leadership prior to being presented to the CareerSource Florida Board, which encourages and ensures transparency, flow of information and open communication between all core programs. Workgroup members have acknowledged the value of the group and the opportunity to plan together, and intend to keep the workgroups active even after the statewide plan has been submitted and the performance accountability system is in place.

These groups will continue to address issues that arise with WIOA implementation, utilizing the structure and processes to resolve gaps or weaknesses. Examples of efforts that will be addressed through this process include, but not limited to:



- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate among core programs to efficiently provide services.
- Membership of state and local workforce boards.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services. SSA-contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other career center partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with intent to include universal design as a separate component of the career center certification process.
- Continue partnerships with community rehabilitation service providers, employers, and career centers.
- Continue partnerships with the Florida Rehabilitation Council and the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind to review, analyze, and advise the rehabilitation partners regarding the performance of their responsibilities.
- Complete a stakeholder engagement analysis to determine where to target outreach efforts, including business engagement.
- Review services, programs and partnerships of core WIOA programs to reduce duplication of efforts, as well as gaps between programs.
- Work collaboratively to ensure that disability coordinators are cross trained with core partner processes.
- Partner to communicate, strategize and execute agreed upon methods of meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Identify opportunities to expand services/programs to meet ongoing needs of individuals with disabilities.



## V. COMMON ASSURANCES

1.	<p>The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;</p> <p><a href="http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2010-12-09-I-1COI-Contract-Policy-Clarification.pdf">http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2010-12-09-I-1COI-Contract-Policy-Clarification.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2010-08-12-A-1WFI-COI-Contracts-2-3-Vote-for-Approval.pdf">http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2010-08-12-A-1WFI-COI-Contracts-2-3-Vote-for-Approval.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2012-05-24-A-2-RWBAA-Contract-Policy-Modifications.pdf">http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2012-05-24-A-2-RWBAA-Contract-Policy-Modifications.pdf</a></p>
2.	<p>The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;</p> <p>Please see the Florida Statute related to the general state policy on public records found at <a href="http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&amp;URL=0100-0199/0119/0119.html">http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&amp;URL=0100-0199/0119/0119.html</a></p>
3.	<p>The lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;</p>



4.	<p>(a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;</p> <p>(b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;</p> <p>A draft of the State Plan, including the requested waivers, will have been posted at least six weeks prior to its submission to the Secretary, with instructions for submitting comments, and is widely distributed to stakeholders throughout the state. Access to information about the State Plan and the processes associated with its preparation and submission is prominently posted on the websites of Workforce Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity, and the Florida Department of Education.</p>
5.	<p>The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;</p>
6.	<p>The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);</p>
7.	<p>The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, as applicable;</p> <p><a href="http://www.floridajobs.org/PDG/guidancepapers/042ADACompGuid042604_rev030608.pdf">http://www.floridajobs.org/PDG/guidancepapers/042ADACompGuid042604_rev030608.pdf</a></p> <p>All programs are monitored for compliance with the non-discrimination and equal employment opportunity provisions of WIOA.</p>
8.	<p>The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;</p>
9.	<p>The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State Board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;</p>
10.	<p>The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);</p>
11.	<p>Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and</p> <p><a href="http://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/2015-memoranda/memo_vets-homelessness_significantbarrier_to_employment.pdf?sfvrsn=2">http://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/2015-memoranda/memo_vets-homelessness_significantbarrier_to_employment.pdf?sfvrsn=2</a></p>



**CareerSource Florida**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Hart IV, President and CEO

**Department of Economic Opportunity**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Cissy Proctor, Executive Director

**Florida Department of Education**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Commissioner Pam Stewart



## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS—ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

**Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B.** The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B:

### (a) General Requirements

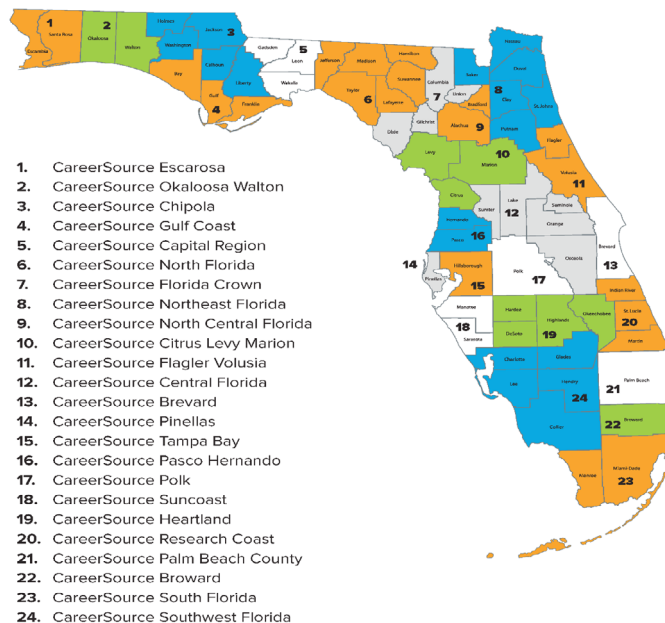
#### (1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

##### Regions and the Local Workforce Development Areas Designated in the State

Florida's 24 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and the local workforce development areas (LWDAs) they serve are shown in the map below and are listed at [www.careersourceflorida.com](http://www.careersourceflorida.com).

**Figure 6.01**

### CAREERSOURCE FLORIDA NETWORK





### (A) Process Used for Designating Local Areas

#### Local Areas

CareerSource Florida in coordination with the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has reviewed the performance and financial integrity of each of the state's 24 currently designated workforce local areas and existing LWDBs. As a result of that review, a recommendation was presented to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors to initially designate all 24 workforce local Areas previously designated under the Workforce Investment Act and to continue the charter of existing local workforce boards for the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017. In a public meeting, the CareerSource Florida Board reviewed the action to provide the initial designation to the existing workforce local areas and to continue the charter to the existing LWDBs contingent upon receipt of an official completed request from each local Area that demonstrated local elected official consultation. Additionally, opportunity for public comment on the action was provided at [www.careersourceflorida.com](http://www.careersourceflorida.com).

#### Planning Regions

Currently, Florida has designated each local area as a planning region. This initial designation was agreed upon based on consultation with the Florida WIOA Task Force, state stakeholder groups, and the LWDBs. Florida sees this designation as a first step to properly implement the planning region concept over the next two years of WIOA full implementation. The CareerSource Florida Board will work to develop the process for continuing to examine identifying planning regions. Florida has identified six factors for the development of regions. These factors include:

1. Single Labor Market
2. Common Economic Development Area
3. Federal and Non-Federal Resources to Carry Out WIOA Activities
4. Population Centers
5. Commuting Patterns
6. Industrial Composition and Sector Alignment

Utilizing these six factors, various regional alignments may be considered and proposed by a number of workforce system stakeholders such as state policymakers, state and local CareerSource Florida Board members, state and local workforce staff, partner program staff, business and industry partners and workforce and education associations. In order for the State to consider and designate local areas, a formal proposal will be presented to the CareerSource Florida Board that includes a rationale for the local area designation recommended using the six factors, and a description of why the regional alignment proposed is in the best interests of the State, business and industry, and workers and job seekers. Each LWDA plan will incorporate their respective strategies toward continuing to evaluate potential regional planning areas.

**(B) Appeals Process Referred to in WIOA Section 106(b)(5)**

Florida has established an appeals process specific to protests regarding local area designations, in its Guidance Paper 005 found at <http://www.floridajobs.org/pdg/administration/005Appeal.rtf>, Appeal Process for Denial of WIOA Area Designation. The appeal process has never been invoked or used.

**(C) Appeals Process Referred to in WIOA Section 121(h)(2)(E)**

At the time of the drafting of this plan, information necessary to complete infrastructure sharing formulas is not available. Updates will be made when final information is received.

**(2) Statewide Activities****(A) State Policies or Guidance for the Statewide Workforce Development System**

Federal and state program guidance is communicated to local workforce partners through participation in state-level policy development activities, formally promulgated and documented in a series of Guidance Papers developed by DEO. These policy documents are vetted by state and local partners before final issuance. This policy and administrative information can be found at:

<http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/policy-and-guidance/guidance-papers>.

Programmatic and administrative requirements are set forth in a Grantee-Sub-grantee Agreement executed by DEO and each local workforce board requiring their compliance with all federal and state laws, regulations and any special state requirements.

State Policy Guidance Information:

- Florida Statutes Section 445 (Workforce Innovation Act), Section 1008 FETPIP, and other administrative requirements described in State Guidance, <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/>
- State Workforce Plan [www.careersourceflorida.com](http://www.careersourceflorida.com)
- State Board Strategic Policies <http://careersourceflorida.com/initiatives/careersource-florida-policies/>
- Local Planning Instructions <http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FINAL-WIOA-Local-Plan-Template.pdf>
- Department of Economic Opportunity Regulations, Division of Workforce Services, Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 73B, [www.flrules.org](http://www.flrules.org)
- DEO Guidance Papers organized by workforce program, <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/policy-and-guidance/guidance-papers>
- DEO Memoranda, organized by year of issuance, [www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/professional-development-and-training/training-materials](http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/professional-development-and-training/training-materials)
- DEO Training Presentations, board-resources/professional-development and training materials, <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce>
- DEO Monitoring Tools, board-resources/program-monitoring and reports, and program-monitoring-review, [www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/program-monitoring-and-reports/program-monitoring-review](http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/program-monitoring-and-reports/program-monitoring-review)



The Department forwards federal directives and other resource materials via Communiqués (issued when DEO comments on the federal document) or via e-mail notification and posting on the DEO website.

### (B) Governor's Set Aside Funding and Rapid Response Funds

#### **Governor's Set Aside Funding**

From these state-level funds, the CareerSource Florida Board allocates certain funds for administrative and program costs of DEO and CareerSource Florida. Additionally, in accordance with Section 445.003(3)(a)2, Florida Statutes, \$2 million in WIOA set-aside funds must be allocated for the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program, administered by the CareerSource Florida professional team. From the balance of state-level WIOA funds, this board determines any additional or specific allotments for purposes of state demonstration and pilot projects as well as other workforce development initiatives.

#### **Rapid Response Funding to Respond to Layoffs**

DEO Reemployment and Emergency Assistance Coordination Team (REACT) serves as Florida's state-level Dislocated Worker Unit. When employers submit layoff and business closing notices under the WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) Act, the DEO REACT staff make initial contact with the employer.

REACT staff request such information as the name and telephone number of the employer's local contact person at each location, the type of business issuing the WARN, the reason for the layoff or business closing, and the possible applicability of the Trade Act. REACT staff then enter the WARN notice into the REACT database and distribute the WARN and the background information to the affected LWDA.

Each LWDB has a Business Service Unit that includes a Rapid Response Coordinator. Staff respond and provide Rapid Response services to employers who have submitted WARN notices or when Trade Act Petitions are filed. The local staff are responsible for making initial contact with a company official to obtain information relative to the layoff. If workers are still attached to the employer, the Rapid Response Coordinator will conduct Rapid Response Information Meetings to the workers providing information on the various services offered in the CareerSource Florida Center and through partner programs. Information covers Reemployment Assistance, Labor Market Information, training opportunities, seminars, workshops, job search assistance etc.

On-site services are also offered when possible to any employer requesting Rapid Response. Routinely, rapid response visits are made to employers laying off 50 or more workers. When a layoff is smaller than 50 workers, the affected workers can be directed to the nearest career center for services.

### (C) Rapid Responses in Cases of Natural Disasters

In cases of natural disasters, the DEO Rapid Response Coordinator works closely with the DEO Emergency Coordination Officer, who in turn, works in conjunction with the state Division of Emergency Management, local county emergency management staff, and FEMA to assess the situation and needs of the affected area. Once it is approved by the local emergency management officials, staff from DEO and the CareerSource Florida network will deploy to the affected area to deliver rapid response services.

The DEO and the CareerSource Florida network has 21 Mobile Career Centers equipped with state of the art telecommunications equipment. These mobile units contain computer equipment, workstations and supplies needed to provide rapid response assistance. After natural disasters, these units can be used to go into affected areas and serve as a mobile career center when local offices have been flooded or



are without electric power. They can also serve as a branch office where hurricanes and tropical storms disrupt local services.

In addition, DEO has a memorandum of understanding with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) that allows the DEO to utilize mobile units owned by MDES if needed.

**(D) Early Intervention to Worker Groups on Whose Behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Petition Has Been Filed**

DEO uses either a WARN, Trade Petition Filing, newspaper article or other reliable means of notification to initiate rapid response assistance to workers who have been notified of potential layoff or have been laid off as a result of trade. Each LWDB has a Business Service Unit that is comprised of a Rapid Response Coordinator who is responsible for making initial contact with a company official to obtain information relative to the layoff. If workers are still attached to the employer, the Rapid Response Coordinator will conduct Rapid Response Information Meetings to the workers providing information on the various services offered in the CareerSource Florida Center and through partner programs. If the Trade petition has been filed and not approved during the Rapid Response meeting, a very brief description of the program services are covered. The workers are advised that once the petition is filed and approved, a scheduled TAA Information Meeting will be made available and an official notice will be mailed to the workers. It is the state's practice not to conduct an actual TAA Information Meeting unless the petition has been certified. Also, if the worker group has not received rapid response assistance; although the workers may have been officially separated from the company/firm, it is encouraged that a Rapid Response Meeting is conducted. If the petition has been approved and rapid response has not been conducted, the State Trade Coordinator ensures that a combined Rapid Response/TAA Information Meeting is conducted for the group. Staff maintains a roster of customers who attended the orientation meetings and record information in the state management information system (Employ Florida Marketplace).

When mass layoffs occur where state level rapid response funding is needed, LWDB will request for funds to assist workers who are in need of career counseling, resume preparation, interviewing skills, etc. It should be noted that the state-level rapid response funding may also be used for lay-off aversion.

**(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements**

**(1) Work-Based Training Models**

Quick Response Training (QRT)/FloridaFlex and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Programs serve as flagship training programs at CareerSource Florida, are market relevant and provide timely training driven by industry's needs and choice of training providers. QRT/FloridaFlex and IWT serve as powerful tools for workforce investment in leveraging considerable public/private funds for targeted training for skills in demand thus achieving greater use of limited public sector training funds. Virtually all businesses receiving training grants are within the state's targeted industries, ensuring investment in wealth-generating jobs for Florida's economic growth.

**Quick Response Training Program**

Florida's Quick Response Training Program, established in 1993, provides state-level funding for customized training to new or expanding businesses. During 2014-2015, Florida continued to enhance the application process for businesses to quickly respond to training objectives in demand-driven areas. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-2015, CareerSource Florida awarded 50 Quick Response Training grants totaling nearly \$11.7 million to support the skills upgrade training for new and 7,465 existing full-time employees. On average, trainees' wages increased by more than 36 percent within a year of completing QRT-supported training. Florida businesses received customized training at an average cost per trainee of \$1,564. Extensive outreach activities were focused on counties, particularly rural counties that have never had a company benefit from QRT training assistance. For every \$1 of QRT funds invested in training, companies matched \$9.00.

Additionally, the Florida Legislature provided funding for the purpose of developing and launching a strategic marketing and business outreach plan for Florida's nationally recognized Quick Response Training (QRT) Program. The marketing plan was developed to identify a long-term vision and strategic objectives for QRT as well as recommendations for marketing and advertising tools and tactics to enhance the program's competitive position and market outreach based on gaining a greater understanding of business customers and potential customers; key influencers including but not limited to economic developers, site selection consultants, workforce development professionals (particularly those within the CareerSource Florida network who provide employment and training solutions for businesses of all sizes); education and training partners and stakeholders; and public policy leaders. The plan provides a clear and concise roadmap for CareerSource Florida's current and future investments in the marketing and promotion of QRT among businesses, including Florida small businesses, and key influencers.

Through this project, CareerSource Florida also began implementation of recommended marketing strategies for messaging to internal and external audiences, development of an education and marketing tool kit for partners, marketing and brand-building materials such as brochures, digital outreach including website enhancements and social media outreach, and advertisements and media placements to support the program's strategic marketing and business outreach objectives. A significant first-year outcome of this three-year Marketing and Outreach Plan was the re-branding of the QRT Program to FloridaFlex.

**Incumbent Worker Training Program**

Established in 1999, Incumbent Worker Training grants provide funding for customized training including skills upgrade training to existing for-profit businesses. Through this grant, Florida is able to effectively retain businesses and help them stay competitive by supporting skills-upgrade training for existing full-time employees. In PY 2014-2015, CareerSource Florida awarded 115 Incumbent Worker Training grants totaling more than \$3.1 million to help companies train and retain more than 7,000 full-time employees. Trainees' wages have increased more than 11 percent on average within fifteen months of completing IWT-supported training. Florida's IWT program is funded at \$2 million annually. Funding priority is given to businesses that are small, or located in rural, enterprise zone, brownfield or inner-city areas, and those businesses in a targeted industry. Since its inception, more than \$100 million in requests for IWT funding have been received and, due to limited funding, 58 percent of the requests have resulted in awards. Extensive outreach through presentations and workshops has been conducted to ensure that as many small businesses as possible are aware of the benefits of the IWT program. IWT is very popular and continues to meet a critical need for Florida's businesses. For every \$1 of IWT funds invested in training, companies matched \$7.39.

**Transitional Jobs and On-the-Job Training**

The state of Florida will increase training opportunities to individuals via alternative training models such as Transitional Jobs and OJT. LWDBs are encouraged to leverage current and develop new local partnerships with community businesses and industry to support economic development in their areas. The coordination of workforce training programs with economic development strategies as envisioned by the Florida Workforce Legislation begins at the LWDB level and is coordinated at the state level by CareerSource Florida.

LWDBs may allocate up to 10 percent of local Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to transitional jobs for individuals with barriers to employment. LWDBs that choose to offer transitional jobs as an alternative training model must ensure that the transitional jobs are time-limited, wage-paid, subsidized work experiences that help individuals who are chronically unemployed and/or have an inconsistent work history. Transitional jobs are used to help such individuals establish a work history, develop skills to access unsubsidized employment, and progress in the workplace. The LWDB's transitional jobs strategy/model will be incorporated into its local plan and must include local definitions for chronically unemployed and inconsistent work history. The local plan will also include the duration for transitional jobs and the strategy the LWDB will be use to promote or encourage the individual's transition into a permanent job once the subsidy ends.

OJT ensures high quality training for both the participant and the employer because both have a vested interest in the success of the program. The employer has the unique opportunity of training potential candidates the correct and most efficient way to perform tasks for their company, at a subsidized cost. The participant has the opportunity to receive direct training and experience that increases their current skill set. Participants also gain new skills to meet the requirements of a new occupation or industry and are better equipped to compete for available jobs. All OJT experiences are provided through contracts between local employers and the LWDB.

**Customized Training**

Customized training is training designed to meet the specialized skill needs or requirements of an employer or group of employers. Customized training is conducted with a commitment by the employer to retain the individual after successful completion of the training and requires the employer to pay a significant share of the cost of the training. Customized training offers the opportunity for employers to train individuals to the specified needs of the employer and provides the opportunity for the individual to learn and gain desired employer skills specific to an employer or industry.

**(2) Registered Apprenticeship**

Registered apprenticeship programs reflect the state workforce network's business-driven values. In partnership with the Florida Office of Apprenticeships, guidance will be provided to LWDBs on Apprenticeship resources and effective integration with Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs.

**(3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure****(4) Priority for Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Individuals, or Individuals Who are Basic Skills Deficient****(5) Criteria for Local Area Transfer of Funds Between The Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs**



The policy governing training provider eligibility can be found at <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/policy-and-guidance/guidance-papers>.

### **(c) Youth Program Requirements**

#### **(1) Criteria for Awarding Grants for Youth Workforce Investment Activities**

The state will defer the development of criteria to be used by local boards for awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities. The criteria shall be established in compliance with WIOA, Section 129 and will be included in each LWDB plan. Youth service providers shall be procured through a competitive process with qualified service providers. In the past, Boards often contracted directly with agencies/organizations serving target populations, and considered a provider's historically-demonstrated success serving the most at-risk populations and those having barriers to employment including juvenile offenders, school drop-outs, disabled youth, those in or aging out of foster care, children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, youth for whom English is a second language, and others meeting the WIOA eligibility criteria.

#### **(2) Youth Program Elements**

Each LWDB will develop a plan to carry out the elements in accordance with WIOA, Section 129 (c)(2). Each local board shall ensure that all youth program elements are available to youth as part of a menu of services based on their objective assessment and Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

#### **(3) Language Specified in WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII)**

Each LWDB shall define the term "requires additional assistance to complete and educational program, or to secure and hold employment." The definition will be included in the LWDB's local plan. Policies established at the local level must be reasonable, quantifiable, and based on evidence that the specific characteristic of the youth identified in the policy objectively requires additional assistance. For example, "reading below grade level" is an example of an evidence-based, quantifiable characteristic; whereas, "low GPA" is an example of a policy needing more specificity. The policy would be improved if the characteristic were more specific and quantifiable, such as a youth with a GPA below a specific threshold.

**(4) State's Definition for Not Attending School and Attending School**

The state of Florida defines out-of-school as an individual who is not younger than 16 or older than age 24 at the time of enrollment into a WIOA funded youth program, who is not attending a regular or alternative school as an out of school youth. Additionally, youth within the specified age range who are attending adult education or a General Education Development (GED) program are considered out-of-school youth. Out-of-school youth must meet the above and be one of the following:

- A school dropout;
- A youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter. School year calendar quarter is based on how a local school district defines its school year quarters;
- A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual and is either basic skills deficient or an English language learner;
- An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
- A homeless individual (as defined in sec. 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6))), a homeless child or youth (as defined in sec. 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))), a runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under sec. 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677), or in an out-of-home placement;
- An individual who is pregnant or parenting;
- An individual with a disability;
- A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

Florida defines in-school youth as a low-income individual who is not younger than age 14 or older than age 21 at the time of enrollment into a WIOA funded youth program, who is attending secondary or post-secondary school. This definition includes youth, within the specified age range, attending Florida Virtual Schools and youth in Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth facilities who do not have a high school diploma or GED. In school youth must meet the above and be one of the following:

- Basic skills deficient;
- An English language learner;
- An offender;
- A homeless individual (as defined in sec. 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6))), a homeless child or youth (as defined in sec. 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))), a runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under sec. 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677), or in an out-of-home placement;
- An individual who is pregnant or parenting;
- An individual with a disability;
- An individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

**(5) Definition of Basic Skills Deficient**

The state will defer to each local board's definition of basic skills deficient in WIOA 3(5)(B) for individuals who are unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. The definition will be included in the LWDB's local plan.

**(d) Single-area State Requirements**

This section not applicable.

**(e) Waiver Requests (optional)**

This section not applicable.



## TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

### The State Plan must include assurances that:

1.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient;
2.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
3.	The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;
4.	The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);
5.	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
6.	The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;
7.	The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);
8.	The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;
9.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
10.	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
11.	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);



**CareerSource Florida**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Hart IV, President

**Department of Economic Opportunity**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Cissy Proctor, Executive Director



## **VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS—WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM**

### **(a) Employment Service Professional Staff Development**

#### **(1) Professional Development for Employment Service Staff**

Florida has designed a comprehensive certificate exam to equip all Employment Service staff with the appropriate knowledge to be able to provide high quality services to job seekers and employers. Within six months of hire, all front-line staff, or staff who provide direct services to job seekers or employers, are required to complete a series of standardized training modules that provide foundational information about the workforce system. The Tier I Certificate is a thorough online training program that covers topics to include the history of the workforce, workforce program overview, and customer service and other job placement techniques. Upon completion of the online training modules, staff are required to complete a comprehensive exam to demonstrate comprehension of the material. Staff must successfully pass the exam to be considered Tier I certified and proficient to assist job seekers and employers.

In addition to a passing score on the Tier I Certificate Exam, staff are required, annually, to seek out new training opportunities to enhance their knowledge and remain up-to-date on new workforce tools and strategies. To assist with the attainment of continuing education units, Florida has also designed a Tier II Certificate program. Tier II content assists staff with learning more in-depth information of the specific workforce programs to include WIOA, Wagner-Peyser (WP), TAA, SNAP, and Welfare Transition (WT). In addition to providing in-depth programmatic information to staff, the Tier II Certificate program also affords a cost effective means to provide cross training opportunities for all staff in one convenient location that can be immediately accessed.

Florida also hosts periodic on-site and web-based training opportunities to share information and keep staff abreast of new trends. In collaboration with other agencies, Florida capitalizes on opportunities to bring the knowledge base of staff full circle by linking duties and responsibilities of the career center staff with those of other departments.

#### **(2) Training and Awareness on Identification of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Eligibility Issues**

Florida will make available curriculum material from the Tier I certificate program to all core partners. The curriculum covers topics to include the history of the workforce, workforce program overview, and customer service and other job placement techniques. Florida has also designed a Tier II Certificate program, which provides staff with in-depth concepts and information of the specific workforce programs to include WIOA, WP, TAA, SNAP, and W. Florida may also incorporate curriculum material into the Tier II Certificate program that includes program specific training for Adult Education and VR and RA, including information to increase awareness on the identification of RA eligibility issues.

**(b) Assistance in Unemployment Compensation Claims Through One-Stop Career Centers**

Each full service career center in the state has a resource room that is equipped with computers for customers to use. Any individual interested in filing a claim may connect to the state's RA claims and benefits system to complete the online application and subsequent work registration steps. Career center staff are available to assist customers with general computer and unemployment application questions. The career centers are also equipped with telephones which customers may use to contact a representative for initial claims questions and assistance.

**(c) Assistance to UI Claimants and Other Unemployed Individuals**

In Florida the majority of Reemployment Assistance claimants are registered as job seekers in the Employ Florida Marketplace within 24 hours of filing for unemployment benefits. This is accomplished via an automated interface between the unemployment compensation system and Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM). Nightly, new Reemployment Assistance claimants' information is sent to EFM where a basic registration is created. This includes the client's email address (if supplied) and a partial work history. The career services skills matching functionality of EFM is then utilized to generate an initial listing of current jobs in the system based on the employment information each claimant gave when filing his/her claim. This generates an automatic email to the claimant that:

- Informs the claimant of his/her EFM log on information;
- Provides a link to the initial list of jobs matched to his/her employment history; and
- Provides the link for him/her to complete a full résumé and begin active use of the system to search and apply for jobs.

This information becomes immediately available to staff who utilize it to contact claimants regarding other career center services that are available. The claimant's skills information also automatically becomes available to employers who are searching for specific candidates to fill job openings.

In 2013, Florida began requiring all claimants who filed an initial claim online to complete a full work registration in EFM prior to receiving benefit payments. The full work registration requires the claimant to create an individual account with demographic information, list an e-mail address on the EFM account, complete a background wizard to collect education, employment and skills information, and post a résumé. The full registration process provides the LWDBs with more information in which to target reemployment services to claimants. Additionally, some claimants elect to complete an online skills assessment that is available to individuals seeking reemployment assistance and/or job services. The skills assessment measures the individuals' skills, abilities, and career aptitude. The LWDBs utilize the results obtained from the assessment to provide a more customized and tiered level of service. Higher scores or results from the assessment may indicate that the claimant is equipped with skills to successfully job search and obtain employment before their benefits expire. These individuals will likely require less staff intervention. Lower scores typically indicate a claimant who may need more intensive staff intervention before being job ready.

Any individual who visits a career center looking for work can receive reemployment assistance services, regardless of whether or not the individual has filed an RA claim. Services available to RA claimants are also available to non-claimants.

**Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS)/Priority Reemployment Planning Program (PREP)**

Florida's reemployment services are centered on the Priority Re-Employment Planning Program (PREP), the state's Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services effort which is operational statewide. A PREP pool consisting of Reemployment Assistance claimants is created on a weekly basis from the initial claims that have been filed during that week. Prior to the transfer into EFM, the following factors are used in the profiling methodology to determine those individuals most likely to exhaust their benefits based on: tenure on their most recent employment, education level, total unemployment rate in the local labor market, last occupation being one of the occupations most in decline (O\*NET), and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). Excluded from the PREP pool are:

- Claimants whose program identification is other than Intrastate claimant;
- Interstate claimant;
- Transitional claimant;
- Claimants on recall status within eight weeks of filing their claim; and
- Claimants with a first payment issued more than 42 days after the benefit year beginning date.

Claimants are placed in the PREP pool on the fourth week of their claims for early intervention purposes. A group assessment interview and the development of a service plan, if necessary, are coupled with the orientation service. Based on the service plan the following services are made available for those claimants who are not job ready: job search workshops, testing, counseling, specific labor market information, and referral to education and or training.

**Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grant**

Under the previous Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, the target population resulting from the WPRS was claimants who were likely to exhaust their RA benefits. Beginning January 1, 2016, Florida is shifting to the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program wherein the target population will change to claimants who are **MOST** likely to exhaust their RA benefits, along with all transition veterans receiving assistance.

The RESEA program is designed to address the reemployment needs of RA claimants who are most likely to exhaust benefits as well as transitioning veterans receiving unemployment for ex-service members (UCX). In addition to providing a specific set of intensive services to these populations, the RESEA program is designed to prevent and detect erroneous Unemployment Insurance (UI) payments. The RESEA program uses a one-on-one intensive appointment process.

**Each RESEA participant receives:**

- An orientation about the career center's services
- An initial assessment to determine the claimant's strengths, weaknesses and barriers to employment
- Labor market information unique to the participant's past or future occupation and work experience. If the labor market information shows the participant's occupation to be in decline, they may be referred for training
- An Employability Development Plan developed jointly by career center staff and the claimant
- Referral to at least one work-search activity such as résumé writing or interviewing workshops
- Referral to training, if needed



There is a feedback loop to the Reemployment Assistance Program for RESEA participants who fail to report to their initial appointment. Reemployment Assistance adjudicators will review the reason for the participant's failure to report to the career center. Consistent with section 443.091, Florida Statutes, failure to appear at the career center as directed for reemployment services may affect the participant's eligibility for Reemployment Assistance benefits and services. The Reemployment Assistance adjudicator will issue a determination of ineligibility if there are no extenuating circumstances (such as moved out of state, returned to work, etc.). The determination includes a disqualification for the week in which the claimant failed to report for reemployment services. When an assessment is completed, an automatic notice is generated to the Reemployment Assistance Program to conduct an Eligibility Review Questionnaire to determine continued reemployment assistance benefit eligibility.

#### **(d) W-P Funds to Support UI Claimants**

##### **(1) Labor Exchange Services for UI Claimants**

Claimants may be selected to attend the mandatory PREP program if they have been profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits prior to returning to work. Selection to attend a PREP appointment will provide the claimant with an orientation of the career center to include services available, as well as an initial assessment service to help determine additional need. With the introduction of the RESEA program, LWDBs in Florida may elect to participate in this program in lieu of the PREP program. For those LWDBs who elect to participate in the RESEA program, claimants selected for reemployment services in these areas will receive an intensive one-on-one session with career center staff. During the one-on-one session, claimants will receive an orientation, initial assessment, specific labor market information, development of an employability plan and be scheduled for additional reemployment services. Claimants who are not profiled and scheduled to attend PREP or RESEA will be offered the full array of WP career services depending on the claimant's request and other determined need. Career services may be scheduled in the management information system requiring the claimant to fulfill their obligation to actively pursue employment. Failure to comply with scheduled services may be communicated to the RA program for referral to an adjudicator for fact finding to be conducted.



Claimants are one of the priority populations supported by Florida's WP funds. Florida's automated processes allow RA claimants to receive reemployment services quickly and seamlessly. Upon filing an initial claim in the RA reporting system, various data points are collected from the claimant's application and transmitted into EFM to create a basic WP application. The claimant is sent with an introductory welcome message that also provides helpful resources regarding the services they may utilize in the system to look for work. On a weekly basis, characteristics collected from the RA claims application (including but not limited to the number of jobs the claimant had over a certain period; the claimant's job tenure and wages; the industry from which the claimant was laid off, as well as the time of year the layoff occurred; the availability of comparable jobs in the area, etc.) is processed through a regression model to derive a profiling coefficient. The coefficient value determines the claimants' likelihood of exhausting RA benefits prior to returning to work and is used to determine which type of mandatory reemployment program the claimant will be assigned to attend. Upon assignment of the coefficient, the claimant is transmitted into a pool that will be used to assign them to the state's Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) program, coined PREP in Florida, or the RESEA program. This automated pool collection and event assignment typically occurs every Saturday. Every Monday, LWDB staff are responsible for viewing the number of claimants in their respective pools and creating events to appropriately accommodate as many claimants as possible. LWDBs operate PREP or RESEA, but never both programs simultaneously. Those LWDBs operating the RESEA program set goals of the number of claimants they will schedule and complete in a given year. These goals are used to determine how many claimants they will schedule each week from their respective pools. LWDBs operating the PREP program typically schedule their full pool, but do not have predetermined numbers to complete. Every Monday night, based on the number of claimants each LWDB determines to schedule, the automated process uses those numbers to populate events. Once events are populated, EFM automatically generates letters for the LWDB to send to the claimant. These letters are printed by staff and mailed to the claimant at least two weeks in advance of their scheduled appointment.

## **(2) Registration of UI Claimants with the State's Employment Service**

In 2013, Florida began requiring all claimants who filed an initial claim online to complete a full work registration in EFM prior to receiving benefit payments. The full work registration requires the claimant to create an individual account to include basic demographic information, list an e-mail address on the EFM account, complete a background wizard to collect education, employment and skills information, and post a résumé. The full registration process provides the LWDBs with more information in which to target reemployment services to claimants. This full work registration must be completed prior to the receipt of any benefit payments.

## **(3) Administration of the Work Test for the State Unemployment Compensation System**

Section 443.091, Florida Statutes requires all reemployment assistance claimants to engage in systematic and sustained efforts to find work, including contacting at least five prospective employers for each week of unemployment. In small counties – defined as having a population of 75,000 or less - a claimant must contact at least three prospective employers for each week of unemployment claimed. Claimants file their work search activities via the internet each week and the Reemployment Assistance Program office conducts random work search reviews. Alternatively, claimants, in lieu of contacting the three or five prospective employers, as appropriate, may for that same week, report in person to a LWDB to meet with a career center representative and access reemployment services.



Upon completion of the RESEA appointment, career center staff are required to electronically submit information related to whether the claimant reported for and received all required services to satisfy the program's minimum requirements. If a claimant has not reported to the appointment as required, an automatic notification is transmitted to the Reemployment Assistance system to notify an adjudicator of potential eligibility issues. The Reemployment Assistance unit conducts a follow up to determine whether the absence should result in a disqualification. In addition to the attendance information logged after the initial appointment, all RESEA claimants have an eligibility review program (ERP) questionnaire conducted to determine continued benefit eligibility.

Similarly, for the PREP program, claimant attendance is recorded in EFM and subsequently reported to the RA system. Any claimant failing to report for their appointment is contacted by adjudication for further benefit eligibility determinations.

#### **(4) Provision of Referrals to and Application Assistance for Training and Education Programs and Resources**

Claimants, regardless of the point of entry, are always assessed to determine their employment and/or training needs. The assessment may take the form of an informal interview to a standardized set of tests. Upon completion of the assessment and interpretation of the results, claimants may be referred to a partner program, such as WIOA, for additional training information and/or enrollment. At the point of referral to a partner program, the claimant's eligibility for training is determined based on the program's eligibility criteria. Career centers throughout the state have also collaborated, and often times share office space, with other educational institutions in which claimants may be referred for education assistance. Wagner-Peyser funds help provide preliminary work readiness workshops such as interviewing skills, résumé writing, job search strategies and can be utilized to provide referrals to internal and external training and education programs and resources.

#### **(e) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)**

##### **(3) Assessment of Need**

##### **(A) Assessment of the Unique Needs of Farmworkers**

According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the agricultural industry in Florida employs approximately two million people and contributes more than \$104 billion to the state's economy. An estimated 47,600 commercial farms in Florida produce nearly 300 different commodities on 9.5 million acres. Florida is the nation's leading citrus producer, accounting for 59 percent of the total U.S. production in the 2013-2014 citrus season. During the season, Florida farmworkers were responsible for harvesting 515,147 acres of citrus trees. The state's citrus production dropped by 21 percent from the previous season; however total U.S. citrus production also dropped by 15 percent. Florida is also ranked first for sales of a number of vegetable and specialty crops. Farmworkers harvested approximately 200,600 acres of vegetable crops, strawberries, blueberries, potatoes, and watermelons during the 2014 season and 412,000 acres of sugarcane. Cash receipts for all agricultural products totaled \$8.45 billion in 2013. Crop commodities, such as greenhouse/nursery, oranges, sugarcane, and tomatoes, accounted for 76.7 percent of these total cash receipts.



According to USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Florida Field Office, 2015 Annual Statistical Bulletin Some pre-harvest activities such as planting, transplanting, tying, staking and pruning are also performed by farmworkers, as well as post-harvest activities such as packing and juice processing. Nursery, citrus, vegetables, and sugarcane comprise Florida's major agricultural commodities. Broken down, nursery is the major crop activity, followed by citrus with oranges leading the way, then grapefruit and other specialty fruits (tangerines, tangelos, etc.). Tomatoes lead the way in vegetable production followed by green peppers, snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, squash, and cabbage. Other special commodities include strawberries, blueberries, watermelons, and potatoes.

Although Florida's citrus acreage has been steadily declining, 12,343 acres of new citrus plantings were reported in the past year. This is the most recorded in a single season since 2009. The blueberry industry in Florida has grown significantly over the years. Florida's climate allows for an earlier blueberry season than the rest of the country, which means during this time the market is available almost exclusively to Florida growers. Plant nurseries and ferneries are also important commodities to Florida's agricultural industry. Florida has the second largest nursery industry in the country, after California. There are an estimated 100,000 farmworkers employed in plant nurseries and ferneries throughout the state. Additionally, an estimated 2,000 or more farmworkers are employed in sod farming for commercial sale. The nursery commodity is increasing and although many workers are employed year-round, this workforce is important to quantify for purposes of determining housing, education and social service needs of the farmworker population.

The transient nature of seasonal farmworkers makes it difficult to develop accurate and consistent estimates of Florida farmworker numbers and farmworker numbers in the state are largely dictated by the extent of agricultural activity in an area. The peak number of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) working in Florida during Program Year (PY) 2014 was estimated to be 130,353.

Although it is too early for a forecast, there are no major changes expected in crop production for the 2015-2016 picking season, unless affected by natural disasters and extreme temperatures. The agriculture labor pool in general is expected to be slightly lower this year, evidenced by trends from previous seasons and an increase in the number of employers using the H-2A Temporary Non-immigrant Agricultural Worker Visa Program. Employers of crops that have not seen such shortages in the past are now joining the H-2A Program, such as strawberries and tomatoes.

The seasonal nature of agricultural work causes a constant need for employment among the farmworker population. Added to this is a need for training to empower the MSFWs and make them more employable and appealing to employers hiring for permanent, higher paying positions. Unfortunately, the majority of MSFWs do not qualify for training programs. In these instances, it is imperative that they be assisted with their immediate employment needs. The need for accessible English as a Second Language (ESL) classes is also predominant among farmworkers in Florida. Farmworkers are not usually able to attend classes offered during the daytime and many times have transportation barriers, therefore there is a need for more classes offered during the evening and/or weekend and for classes that are more conveniently located to the rural areas where farmworker housing is located.

#### **(B) Available Resources for Outreach**

Florida provides outreach through nine career centers in agriculturally significant areas. Each outreach staff is equipped with information of available resources and enjoys continuing relationships with local organizations serving MSFWs. Vigorous outreach to the farmworker community is conducted in the state to ensure that farmworkers are provided assistance with job referrals, referrals to training and ESL, and referrals to supportive services to assist and empower them in overcoming the many barriers they face. While current services are sufficient, the state will evaluate resources and partnerships to meet the needs of customers.



#### (4) Outreach Activities

##### (A) State Agency's Proposed Outreach Activities

The main objective of DEO and its partner outreach programs is to actively locate and contact those MSFWs who may not be reached through normal intake activities conducted at career centers. In making contact with MSFWs, outreach workers explain the services offered and the types of training and employment opportunities available, provide information on protections and rights of MSFWs, and information regarding other organizations that provide services to MSFWs. State merit staff performing outreach will be bilingual and whenever possible, have an MSFW background or be a member of a minority group representative of the MSFW population. New staff will have access to online training modules and in-person training. The outreach program is further supported by a full-time State Monitor Advocate position with all the previously mentioned criteria and a half-time Assistant State Monitor Advocate.

##### (B) Proposed Outreach Activities

###### (i) Goals for Farmworker Contacts

There are currently nine LWDAs designated as significant MSFW locations in Florida. Within those local areas, there are eleven career centers designated as significant bilingual sites.

Florida will continue to operate its eleven designated significant MSFW career centers during PY 2017 – PY 2020. Following is a list of these significant career centers, along with corresponding outreach goals per program year.

**Figure 7.01**  
**MSFW Significant/Bilingual Office Locations**

Significant/Bilingual Office Location	LWDA	# of Assigned FTE Positions	# of MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Quality MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Staff Days
Quincy	5	1	1,000	800	190
Plant City	15	1	2,200	1,700	190
Winter Haven	17	1	1,800	1,250	190
Bradenton	18	1	2,000	1,650	190
Sebring	19	1	2,200	950	190
Wauchula	19	1	2,200	950	190
Port Saint Lucie	20	1	1,800	1,100	190
Belle Glade	21	1	1,950	1,050	190
Homestead	23	1	2,000	1,350	190
Immokalee	24	1	2,200	1,250	190
Clewiston	24	1	2,200	950	190
<b>Total</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>21,550</b>	<b>13,000</b>	<b>2,090</b>



At the state level, planned MSFW outreach contacts will be based in part on accomplishments during the prior two program years and estimated number of MSFWs in the state in order to set achievable goals. Florida also reports “quality” outreach contacts made with MSFWs, meaning a contact where a reportable staff assisted service is provided and documented. Florida made 40,978 outreach contacts, of which 11,944 were quality contacts, in PY 2013 and 40,147 outreach contacts, 11,489 of which were quality, in PY 2014. During PY 2016 – PY 2019, Florida plans to make at least 21,550 total outreach contacts per program year, 13,000 of which will be quality contacts. Outreach workers will be required to spend a total of 190 staff days, or 80 percent of staff time, conducting outreach. They will also be required to make a minimum of five quality contacts per staff day.

(ii) **Farmworkers Contacted Each Program Year by Other Agencies Under Cooperative Arrangements**

To maintain service levels, outreach services will be supplemented to the extent possible through partner agencies. Informal cooperative agreements with other public and private social service agencies, such as local providers of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, will be established in order to provide joint outreach efforts to the MSFW population. Approximately 800 additional contacts will be made per program year via nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies. To further support this initiative, a memorandum of understanding will be enacted with the Florida Department of Education’s Farmworker Career Development Program (FCDP), the state’s NFJP grantee, to outline these outreach efforts. The memorandum of understanding will lay out requirements for significant career center outreach staff and FCDP local provider staff to provide required information on the other partner’s programs and services during individual outreach efforts, to conduct outreach jointly when feasible, and to report outreach activities and contacts to the other party. Career centers having some agricultural activity but that do not meet the ten percent criteria for the significant career center designation will also be required to set up nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies.

(iii) **State’s Plans to Conduct Outreach**

Outreach workers will specifically be assigned to areas where there is significant agricultural activity and where a large number of job applicants are MSFWs. Outreach workers trained in the recruitment and provision of services will be available directly through the significant career center network. DEO will consider and be sensitive to the preferences, needs and skills of individual MSFWs and the availability of jobs and training opportunities.

Outreach will be accomplished through personal contacts, printed material, the media, community involvement and cooperative ventures with private and public agencies. Outreach workers will make personal contacts with MSFWs on a daily basis to explain the services available through the career centers and other agencies, including the availability of referrals to employment, training and supportive services; information on specific employment opportunities currently available, such as H-2A jobs and other low-skilled jobs; a basic summary of farmworker rights; and information on the employment service complaint system, including the Florida Farmworker Helpline. They will also provide this explanation in writing by way of the DEO Form 511N, which is available in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole. Additional materials to be provided during outreach include a brochure outlining basic farmworker rights and flyers or brochures from partner agencies outlining services available. MSFWs are provided the location of the nearest career center and encouraged to visit the center to obtain the full range of employment and training services. The 511N form includes the locations of all significant MSFW centers in Florida.



Outreach workers will visit sites where farmworkers live, work and gather, including pickup points, mass recruitments and orientations at farms, migrant health clinics, and locations where social services are provided, in order to contact the maximum number of MSFWs possible. Posters and other printed materials will be distributed at these locations to maximize penetration into the farmworker community. Follow-up contacts will be made with MSFWs to help ensure that needs have been met and to determine if any other assistance can be provided. DEO and its partners will continue to establish new linkages and use existing relationships with local and statewide networks to solicit information and suggestions from appropriate public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other groups representing and advocating on behalf of MSFWs.

Processing job applications, assessments and job referrals for MSFWs will be emphasized to assist in year-round employment. Outreach workers will encourage MSFWs to complete applications during outreach to receive services onsite. This will also facilitate easier access to services when the customer decides to visit the career centers in the future. In completing applications, a full description of the work history will be made to assess the MSFWs' knowledge and skill level. Should demand or organizational considerations require, other trained staff would be made available to assist in service delivery. Collaboration will be made with the local providers of the WIOA Section 167 NFJP grantee to maximize training opportunities.

(iv) **The Number of Outreach Workers Dedicated to Outreach to Farmworkers by Service Areas**

See the chart provided in VII(e)(2)(B)(i) above.

(5) **State's Strategy For:**

(A) **Coordinating Outreach Efforts with WIOA Title 1 Section 167 Grantees as Well as with Public and Private Community Service Agencies and MSFW Groups**

The MSFW outreach workers will maintain a continuing relationship with all community groups, public agencies and advocacy groups interested in the welfare of farmworkers. Contact will be made with agricultural employers for possible job openings, and the outreach workers will assist career center staff with recruiting MSFWs for those specific job orders

(B) **Explaining to Farmworkers the Services Available at the Local One-Stop Centers**

Response combined with response to section VII(e)(4).

(C) **Marketing the Employment Service Complaint System to Farmworkers and Other Farmworker Advocacy Groups**

Outreach workers are fully trained in all aspects of employment-related services to MSFWs, including taking complaints while in the field. The employment service complaint system is marketed to farmworkers during outreach and to agencies as well. One mechanism used to promote the complaint system is the Florida Farmworker Helpline, a toll-free number for farmworkers to call if they wish to file a complaint or report a violation anonymously. Outreach materials used, such as the DEO 511N form, farmworker rights brochure, and Farmworker Helpline business cards, include the helpline number. This number is also included on complaint posters located in significant MSFW career centers. Helpline business cards are left at agencies and businesses that serve farmworkers. Additionally, farmworkers and agencies are informed that complaints can be filed in person at any career center or with an outreach worker.



(D) Providing Farm Workers with a Basic Summary of Farmworker Rights, Including Their Rights with Respect to the Terms and Conditions of Employment

Farm labor compliance training is provided to outreach workers at the annual MSFW Staff Development Conference. Guest speakers from different state and federal enforcement agencies, such as the USDOL Wage and Hour Division, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Florida Department of Health are invited to present workshops on compliance with employment laws at these conferences. This training provides outreach staff with the knowledge necessary to discuss farmworker rights with MSFWs during outreach.

(E) Urging Those Farm Workers Who Have Been Reached Through the State's Outreach Efforts to Go to the Local One-Stop Center to Obtain the Full Range of Employment and Training Services

Response combined with response to section VII(e)(4).

**(6) Services Provided to Farmworkers and Agricultural Employers Through the One-Stop Delivery System**

**Services to Farmworkers**

Florida ensures that LWDBs and career centers serve all applicants, including MSFWs. Bilingual staff are available at all significant centers as well as many other centers across the state. In the career center network, staff are trained on the assistance needs of MSFWs. As part of the registration process, customers will be identified as MSFWs at the initial point of contact/intake and provided with a verbal and written explanation of services available in English, Spanish or Creole. An MSFW desk aide is available to all staff to assist in identifying MSFWs.

Career and training services will be provided as necessary to MSFWs. Basic and individualized career staff assisted services will be provided through outreach and in the career center to MSFWs. Florida's electronic system, EFM, allows for self-services at any location, without the need of visiting a career center. Customers utilizing self-services at the career center, however, will have access to staff assistance.

The MSFWs' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) will be assessed to determine appropriate jobs to which they may be referred. Job referrals will be provided through mass recruitments, H-2A job referrals, other low-skilled job referrals and job developments. Effort will be made to refer MSFW job seekers to H-2A job orders whenever possible. Aside from Florida H-2A job orders, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania H-2A jobs are also posted in EFM. Staff will ensure terms and conditions of employment are discussed prior to referral and that the job seeker is aware of the assurances afforded. H-2A job orders are suppressed in the EFM system for the purpose of ensuring maximum protections to the applicant. Staff are required to follow up on all referrals made to H-2A job orders.

Referrals will be made to ESL classes to reduce language barriers and resume and interviewing skills workshops to enable MSFWs to become more competitive in the workforce. Staff will also provide career guidance and suggest training programs that would best serve the needs of those who are not job ready or those who are ready for a change in occupation. Referrals will be made to local FCDP training programs and LWDB training programs. Co-enrollments will take place when possible. Other programs MSFWs may be referred to include VR (for disabled MSFWs), older workers programs and housing assistance agencies. Staff will also be familiar with and refer MSFWs appropriately to other community supportive services.



As part of a strategic initiative to increase collaboration and co-enrollments with FCDP local providers, the State Monitor Advocate and FCDP state staff have been facilitating onsite meetings with local WIOA program staff, case managers, office managers, outreach staff and local FCDP coordinators. These efforts are further enhanced by plans to incorporate the online FCDP database into EFM. Beginning PY 2016, local FCDP providers will have staff accounts in the EFM system. FCDP will have their own program module within EFM to document intake, enrollment, services, and outcomes. This will maximize a seamless service delivery to MSFW customers by career centers and FCDP. It will also ease the data sharing process to ensure that services are not duplicated.

The State Monitor Advocate or Assistant Monitor Advocate will conduct quality assurance visits to all significant offices on an annual basis to ensure that MSFWs have equal access to employment opportunities through Florida's career center delivery system. Wagner-Peyser (WP) monitoring staff will ensure MSFWs have equal access to services during quality assurance desk reviews of non-significant LWDBs.

### **Services to Agricultural Employers**

Florida ensures that all career centers make assistance available to all employers, including those in the agricultural industry, in filling job openings. To increase employer participation, links have been established with employers, employer associations and other employer groups to identify potential employers to establish a pool by which to refer MSFWs. Career center staff in significant MSFW centers, along with the assistance of LWDB Business Service Representatives, will perform marketing outreach to growers, harvesters and processors. The career centers will develop new employer contacts, maintain existing contacts and encourage job order creation through the local career centers. State office staff will also promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers through participation at employer conferences and seminars and through DEO's website. The State Monitor Advocate will continue to partner with the Wage and Hour Division and agricultural employer organizations to conduct employer forums to agricultural employers and provide information on services available to employers, especially those pertaining to the agricultural industry such as local mass recruitments and the Agricultural Recruitment System.

Identifying the needs of employers will continue to be a high priority. A coordinated marketing program will be used to deliver services to employers, and a proactive approach will be taken to assist employers in filling their job vacancies. Strategies that will be used to promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers include recruiting agreements, job fairs and new business relationships. Some of these efforts include advising worker advocates and groups through notifications of job orders in both English and Spanish; and providing notification to employers and advocates of any changes to foreign labor program requirements that affect workers. Increased use of the Internet will also enhance service delivery to both the employers and applicants.

A number of career centers have agricultural recruiting agreements with large employers in an effort to place more MSFWs in job opportunity situations. Mass recruitment agreements are offered to agricultural employers at the beginning of a season or when large pools of labor are needed. These agreements can include services such as marketing, prescreening, referral, and completion of applications and I-9 documents. These services are often continued on an ongoing basis throughout the season, as needed by the employer.



As noted earlier, more agricultural employers are using the H-2A Temporary Non-Immigrant Alien Agricultural Worker Program. The state office provides assistance to these employers. H-2A job orders are entered by DEO's Foreign Labor Certification office. During PY 2014, the Department processed 183 H-2A applications and job orders for Florida employers, an increase from the previous year. This number is expected to steadily increase for PY 2016, based on previous years' trends. As a result, the state has been required to conduct increased pre-occupancy housing inspections, prevailing wage surveys and on-site recruitment. The Agricultural Recruitment System is an alternative to the H-2A program that will be offered to employers who have temporary agricultural or food processing jobs and are in need of workers.

State and local staff participate in recruitment efforts with Florida employers and farmworker organizations to recruit domestic workers. Staff will be encouraged to promote available H-2A jobs and the benefits offered during outreach activities, utilizing the tools previously mentioned. Coordinating activities with farmworker groups will maintain dialogue on job and worker availability to help increase U.S. worker participation. Career centers in significant agricultural areas will be provided copies of approved clearance orders that will provide all staff, including outreach workers, with current information on job availability to assist in these efforts. Career centers will be provided information on out-of-state clearance orders that can be found on the EFM system. Domestic farmworker crews, family groups and individuals will also be recruited and referred to agricultural employers who submit job orders in agricultural occupations.

#### **(7) Other Requirements**

##### **(A) State Monitor Advocate**

Florida has a full-time State Monitor Advocate who has been afforded the opportunity to formulate the PY 2016 Agricultural Outreach Plan. All comments, suggestions and recommendations of the State Monitor Advocate have been incorporated in the plan, as well as any received from the FCDP, the farmworker communities, LWDBs, and other interested parties.

Outreach activities will be documented on the Log of Daily Outreach Activities. The log form includes the number of MSFWs contacted, the amount of time expended, the services provided and information on complaints received. All outreach workers will utilize standard forms such as the job application, complaint forms and logs of apparent violations. Monthly reports that summarize all outreach efforts and activities will be submitted to the State Monitor Advocate. These reports will include an analysis of the outreach activities performed by the outreach worker on a qualitative and quantitative basis and a summary of the total career center outreach effort. Monitoring of the outreach activities will be conducted to assess and report on the parity of services provided.

##### **(B) Review and Public Comment**

All comments, suggestions and recommendations of the State Monitor Advocate have been incorporated in the plan, as well as any received from the FCDP, the farmworker communities, LWDBs, and other interested parties.

**(C) Assessment of Progress**

The Department greatly exceeded the outreach goals outlined in the PY 2014 Agricultural Outreach Plan. The goal of 19,500 outreach contacts was met at the rate of 206 percent, by conducting 40,147 outreach contacts during PY 2014. However, the goal of 13,075 quality outreach contacts was not met. Only 11,489 quality contacts were made during PY 2014, a rate of 88 percent. Also, only 1,385 staff days of the 2,090 goal for staff days of outreach was met. Extended vacancies in a couple significant offices greatly impacted outreach activities, especially quality outreach. New staff have been hired and trained, therefore activities should be on the rise. The goal of 190 staff days per outreach worker was still somewhat unrealistic, even after being reduced from 210 staff days in previous plans. Therefore, the required number of staff days dedicated to outreach was decreased to 185 per outreach worker. Additionally, the goal for 500 outreach contacts made by cooperating agencies was not met; only 40 contacts were reported for PY 2014, and it is still believed this is due to a lack of reporting from partner agencies. This issue is being addressed through the onsite partnership meetings with FCDP. The State Monitor Advocate will also meet with other farmworker agencies throughout the state, who are in those areas not covered by a significant office to discuss and establish informal agreements for outreach.

**WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES****The State Plan must include assurances that:**

1.	The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3));
2.	The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
3.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
4.	State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.



**CareerSource Florida**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Hart IV, President and CEO

**Department of Economic Opportunity**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Cissy Proctor, Executive Director



## **VIII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS—ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS**

---

### **(a) Aligning of Content Standards**

Florida has a longstanding history of standards-based instruction from the original Sunshine State Standards to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and most recently with the adoption of the Florida Standards (English Language Arts and Mathematics) by the state board of Education in 2014. The Florida Standards are the official state-adopted challenging academic content standards that fulfill the statutory requirement, under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)). Anchored by empirical evidence of what employers and educators actually demand of prospective employees and students, the Florida Standards share a dual purpose in preparing both K-12 and adult students to be college and career ready.

Florida has historically set clear expectations between K-12 and its content equivalent counterpart in adult education by ensuring that standards-based instruction is aligned to the state adopted content standards in K-12; thus ensuring that all students (K-12 or adult), regardless of their pathway to graduation, have access to rigorous standards that will prepare them to be college and career ready. As such, Florida has already aligned its adult education content standards for Adult Basic Education (ABE) to the Florida Standards. ABE standards are the grade level equivalent of K-8 of the Florida Standards. The adult education curriculum frameworks containing the aligned standards were approved by the State Board of Education in April 2015.

At the adult secondary level, adult high school credit programs implement the same course descriptions and standards as those used in the K-12 educational system and adult students participate in the same statewide assessment program that measures student mastery of the Florida Standards. GED® preparation courses are also a component of Florida's adult secondary level programming and are also aligned to Florida's evidenced-based standards.

A high school equivalency diploma is issued in Florida to candidates who successfully demonstrate competency in language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies. The assessment used for the diploma program is the 2014 GED® Test, which was selected based upon a competitive procurement conducted to select a single assessment product for high school equivalency in Florida. The competitive process included a review of the assessment content for alignment with Florida's Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as social studies and science content. The review process confirmed the alignment of the assessment with challenging academic standards. The current contract period for the use of the assessment runs through December 2017 and may be extended through December 2020 on an annual basis. All high school equivalency diploma state curriculum is aligned to the content standards for this assessment. Future competitive procurements will require that the assessment be based upon Florida's academic content standards for high school graduates.

**(b) Local Activities**

The state will run a continuation grant process for 2016-2017 and a competition process for 2017-2018 will be conducted in early spring of 2017. The 13 considerations will be incorporated into the state's RFPs to ensure that the state is in compliance with each of the elements. Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to meet the literacy needs of the area, the ability to comply with WIOA expectations, the past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals. Decisions are made about course offerings depending on local need.

**Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)*****Adult General Education Programs and Courses***

Standards for each course are reviewed and updated annually and submitted to the State Board of Education for approval. If major changes are made, they are outlined in the change document and posted on the FDOE website to notify stakeholders of the changes to standards or courses.

Each course lists content standards that are used by local programs as the basis for a program's curriculum development process. The standards provide guidance for new instructors who may have limited training in teaching adults enrolled in adult basic classes. The standards serve as a basis for what should be taught in the classroom. To assist with the implementation of these standards, professional development is provided through local face-to-face workshops and webinars. The curriculum frameworks are available at <http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/2015-2016-adult-edu-curriculum-frameworko.shtml>

**Figure 8.01**

<b>ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES</b>	
<b>Adult Basic Education (language arts, mathematics, and reading) Program</b>	The courses included in this program are designed for the student to obtain a level of educational instruction intended to improve the employability of the state's workforce through instruction in mathematics, reading, language, and workforce preparation skills at grade level equivalency of 0-8.9. These courses are based on the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education.
<b>Adult High School Program</b>	This program is designed for students to receive high school credit in one or more courses leading to a standard high school diploma. Students obtain credits upon completion of courses and passing state mandated assessments necessary to qualify for a high school diploma. Except as provided elsewhere in law (section 1003.4282, (7)(b)(1-3), Florida Statute), the graduation requirements for adults shall be the same as those for secondary students.
<b>GED® Preparation Program</b>	This program prepares adults to successfully complete the four subject area tests leading to qualification for a State of Florida High School Diploma. There are four courses Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science and Social Studies. These courses have been aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards. Florida has approved the GED® as the only high school equivalency test.
<b>GED® Integrated Course</b>	This comprehensive course includes the four courses, Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science and Social Studies and was developed for students with simultaneous enrollment in the GED® Preparation program and a career and technical certificate program.


**ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) PROGRAM**

<b>Adult ESOL Course</b>	The adult ESOL course is designed to improve the employability of adults who desire to enter the state's workforce through acquisition of communication skills and cultural competencies which enhance the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English. College and career readiness standards have been included in the ESOL advanced level 6.
<b>English Literacy for Career and Technical Education (ELCATE) Course</b>	This course is designed for ESOL students that have a goal of enrolling in a career and technical program. Students must test at the High-Intermediate level or above for enrollment into or placement in ELCATE. The course helps to prepare students for a more successful transition to and leading to completion of career and technical education.

**THESE ADULT EDUCATION COURSES ARE NOT SUPPORTED WITH FEDERAL FUNDS AND ARE NOT REPORTED FOR NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM (NRS) PURPOSES**

<b>Citizenship Course</b>	This course is designed to prepare students for success in becoming naturalized citizens of the United States (U.S.). For adults preparing for the citizenship test, the content includes U.S. history, government, culture and symbols, with specific emphasis on rights and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States of America.
<b>Adult ESOL College and Career Readiness Course</b>	The purpose of this course is to improve the advanced ESOL students' ability to communicate in English, and allow them to acquire secondary level English language skills. College and career readiness standards have been integrated into this course with the intention of successful transition and leading to completion of postsecondary education.
<b>Adult ESOL Literacy Skills Course</b>	The purpose of this course is to provide English language and literacy instruction for English language learner adults whose first language is other than English and who are non-literate or semi-literate in their home language, in order to increase their ability to communicate in English.
<b>Adult General Education for Adults with Disabilities Course</b>	This course is designed to provide specialized adult general education for adults with learning disabilities. Adults who require intensive, ongoing support, in their pursuit of educational instruction, literacy, workplace and life skills can participate literacy activities to accomplish desired personal goals for employment or further education.
<b>Applied Academics for Adult Education Course</b>	This course is designed for students who have tested at the equivalent of 9th grade and above but lack the required level of basic skills for completion of the CTE program in which they are enrolled. Students may or may not have earned a high school diploma. These courses have been updated to align with the secondary (9-12) college and career readiness standards.

***Workforce Preparation Activities***

Standards for career planning and exploration and technology (digital literacy) are included in the adult education curriculum frameworks. In coordination with advisory groups for ABE, ESOL, and ASE programs, additional standards in the area of employability skills have also been integrated into the adult education courses. The standards are based on the United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education's Framework for Employability Skills and additional resources. Webinars will be provided on strategies to integrate employability skills into the classroom. All updated courses are submitted to the State Board of Education for approval on an annual basis. ABE, ESOL (advanced level 6) and GED® preparation courses are aligned with college and career readiness standards (CCRS). The learning objectives of the CCRS represent an application of skills that include critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills that will prepare students for success in career and postsecondary education.

***Integrated Education and Training (IET)***

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

The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) promotes the development of contextualized instruction with a specific career pathway focus, career development, and transition services to be integrated into the lower levels of ABE and ESOL. This content will provide adults with the knowledge and skills they need to enroll and be successful in postsecondary education. After students have achieved the educational functioning levels in ABE and ESOL, the next step for those without a high school diploma may include enrolling in the GED® Preparation program (GED-i course) and a career and technical certificate program at the same time. Training will be provided to support the development and implementation of contextualized instruction with a career focus, career exploration and planning, and transition services.

***Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education***

Civics standards are integrated in the ESOL curriculum frameworks. In addition, workshops on integrating civics activities into the ESOL program will be conducted annually. Webinars on civics activities and integration strategies will also be available and archived on the Institute for Professional Development for Adult Educators (IPDAE) website at <http://www.floridaipdae.org>. The adult ESOL courses will be contextualized to support transition to ABE or GED® Preparation and to postsecondary education and employment. Professional development will be provided on developing and delivering contextualized curriculum.

**Special Rule**

All Request for Application (RFA) and Request for Proposal (RFP) specify that no funds are to be used for activities to support individuals under 16 years of age and who are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school except that the agency may use funds for programs, services, or activities related to family literacy activities. If family literacy activities are provided, the eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with other agencies that provide program and services that are not included in Title II funds. This should occur prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

**(c) Corrections Education and Other Education of Institutionalized Individuals**

The DCAE will spend no more than 10 percent of the 82.5 percent of the state grant that must be allotted to local programs for correctional education activities, as specified in section 225 of WIOA. Funding allocations will be determined as part of the planning process for implementation of WIOA. As required by WIOA, individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program are eligible for enrollment in adult education programs. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and ESOL. Individuals also participate in career exploration and planning activities to develop a career and education plan based on career goals.

**(d) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program**

Civics standards are integrated in Florida's ESOL curriculum frameworks. The civics content includes career information, contextualized lesson plans and workforce preparation activities. ESOL level 6 includes college and career readiness standards for reading integrated into the ESOL/EL Civics program. By integrating English literacy and civics education programs, the instruction is strengthened to prepare adult learners regardless of education attained in their native country, to acquire the basic skills of language acquisition and to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and services provided by systems in the U.S. such as health, government and education. Adult educators will have the opportunity to participate in ESOL/EL Civics regional workshops and webinars sponsored in collaboration with the IPDAE, Adult and Community Educators (ACE) of Florida, and the Florida Literacy Coalition. Webinars on civics integration will also be available and archived on the IPDAE website at [www.floridaipdae.org](http://www.floridaipdae.org).

Teachers providing EL/Civics instruction are provided the FDOE "EL/Civics Teacher Handbook" which can be found on the FDOE adult education website [www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/resources.shtml](http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/resources.shtml).

Local educational agencies that implement EL/Civics education grants incorporate the four components of English literacy and civics education throughout the course, as found at the EL/Civics online website [www.elciviconline.org/](http://www.elciviconline.org/) and covers EL/Civics content.

EL/Civics funds for local and state leadership activities are distributed through multi-year competitive and continuation local grants. Only sites that have established ESOL programs are eligible to apply for EL/Civics funds. Funds will be used for the integration of civics content and to support civic activities. ESOL programs follow the state curriculum frameworks that integrate civics-related standards. To ensure workforce preparation activities are integrated into the classroom, standards have been developed and included in the adult education courses. Training through face-to-face workshops and webinars will also be conducted on integration of civics and other activities into the ESOL program.



During the next two years, the ESOL programs will begin to implement contextualized curriculum with a career focus in level 5 and 6 of adult ESOL or ELCATE courses. This will be the first phase in moving toward ESOL integrated education and training programs through FICAPS. The second phase includes enrolling students simultaneously in an ESOL or ELCATE courses and a career and technical certificate program. Florida was selected to participate in the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) ESOL Pro Project, sponsored by the United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education with the objective of training teachers in delivering contextualized career-focused instruction. This project's overall purpose is to provide training, technical assistance and resources for preparing English language learners for work and career pathways. Additional training to support this effort will be provided on developing contextualized instruction for ESOL/EL Civics programs.

Career advisement activities will be provided to English language learners about in-demand occupations in their local areas. Local programs will collaborate with the LWDBs/one-stop career centers to determine local job demand when identifying career information to share with their adult students. Career-focused contextualized curriculum will be implemented in the ESOL/EL Civics program. Adults will be informed of services available at the local one-Stop career centers that include career services and job placement.

#### (e) **State Leadership**

The four mandatory leadership activities are:

1. ***Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with core partners and CareerSource Florida partners.*** Programs submitting a grant application during a competition or continuation grant year must submit the grant application to the local CareerSource Florida network board to ensure that the activities are in alignment with the CareerSource Florida network local plan. Leadership funds will be used to conduct a competitive grant process in the spring of 2016 to award grants in the amount of \$25,000 to develop an integrated education and training program. Eight programs were awarded a grant in the 2015 grant process. Each program will work closely with the local board to determine job demand when they are selecting a career pathway program that is offered by their local regional technical center or college or state college.

CareerSource Florida network career centers and adult education programs work collaboratively within their local areas; assessment and instructional services are often provided on-site at the centers. Local CareerSource Florida network career center staff is provided the opportunity to participate in TABE and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) trainings conducted by the DCAE throughout the year. Many CareerSource Florida centers provide representatives directly to the adult education facility who offer counseling, advising, and other services related to awareness of workforce resources. The sharing of cross-referral outcomes will be a priority of the FDOE in order to support the goals of WIOA and increase student access and achievement.



- 2. *The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs (section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA)*** – The DCAE supports professional development with leadership grants to the IPDAE, Adult and Community Educators (ACE) of Florida professional organization, and the Florida Literacy Coalition. IPDAE is the main professional development hub for adult education at <http://www.floridaipdae.org>. IPDAE provides a web-based site which allows adult educators access to various resources. These resources include, but are not limited to, electronic documents, toolkits, lessons, videos, workshops, webinars, virtual trainings, online training modules, newsletters and consistent communication outreach via an email contact database. IPDAE provides the convergence of subject matter experts, interactivity engagements, planning/coordination and a technology platform to disseminate information required for the implementation of adult education programs. IPDAE also provides a means of measuring and assessing involvement and effectiveness of adult education programs through data reports, evaluations and surveys.

Regional workshops and webinars are conducted on professional development priorities identified by the professional development advisory committee, results from statewide needs assessments, and the DCAE staff. The priorities identified for implementation for this state plan are research-based reading strategies, integrated education and training, contextualized instruction, and implementation of college and career readiness standards in adult education and ESOL. The training events calendar is available at the IPDAE website. Additional training opportunities are listed on the ACE of Florida website, <http://www.aceofflorida.org> and the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) website, <http://www.floridaliteracy.org>. ACE conducts an annual conference for adult educators and regional workshops on ESOL and EL Civics. FLC provides training for tutors, volunteers, and leadership from community-based organizations. FLC conducts an annual conference that targets adult educators, tutors and volunteers, and community-based organizations.

- 3. *Technical Assistance*** – The DCAE will provide technical assistance on programmatic and data collection and reporting issues to providers through webinars, telephone inquiries and site visits. Technical assistance papers on assessment and adult high school policies are annually updated and posted on the Florida Department of Education website and Florida IPDAE.

Current practices with one-stop career center and provider partnerships include referrals, locating teacher and classroom at the CareerSource Florida center, or providing space for the CareerSource Florida activities in the adult education center. As part of the RFA and RFP process, the eligible recipient will submit their application for review to the LWDB to ensure alignment with their plans.

- 4. *Use of Technology*** – Technical assistance will be provided to staff and providers on the use of technology and distance learning options. Technology standards have been added to each of the adult education program curriculum frameworks. Conferences, webinars, and meetings will focus on innovative use of technology in adult education classrooms. Over 50 percent of districts' and colleges' adult education programs are members of the Florida Adult and Technical Distance Learning Consortium (FATDEC). FATDEC offerings include English Discoveries Online (ESOL), Instruction Targeted for TABE Success, AZTEC GED® (GED® Preparation), and twenty-six courses available for high school credit. High school courses are acquired from Florida Virtual School (K-12 system) and customized for adults. In addition to FATDEC offerings, programs make local decisions to implement additional on-line vendor products for ESOL, ABE, and ASE.



**There are 13 permissible state leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.** The following activities (number for permissible activity listed in WIOA) are supported with leadership funds:

***The support of state or regional networks of literacy resource centers (1)***

The state provides a leadership grant to support the Florida Literacy Coalition. Professional development is customized for tutors and volunteers and is available online and face-to-face. Support is also provided to the leadership of literacy centers operating throughout the state. An annual conference is also conducted. A resource center and toll-free number is available for requesting information and materials.

***Developing models for integrated education and training and career pathways (4)*** FICAPS includes a pilot project where students will enroll in GED®-i preparation course and a career and technical program simultaneously. Eight adult education programs, through a competitive process, were awarded \$25,000 each to plan, design, or implement the program with full implementation beginning in 2016. This model is based on Washington State's Integrated-Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST).

In addition, professional development activities support permissible activities numbered (2), (5), and (6). Curriculum frameworks (9) are updated and approved by the State Board of Education annually. The frameworks include standards that have been aligned to the state academic standards for English language arts and mathematics.

**(f) Assessing Quality**

DCAE uses various means of assessment in its annual and ongoing evaluation process, including site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial audits. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

**Monitoring**

DCAE will implement a Quality Assurance System that will assure student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, state statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award.

The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System is risk-based. Risk assessment is a process used to evaluate variables associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for the level of risk to the FDOE and DCAE associated with each provider. In order to complete a risk assessment, certain risk factors have been identified which may affect the level of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider.

The annual risk assessment is conducted by the quality assurance team to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, desktop self-assessment, grant reviews, etc., with the more comprehensive strategy such as an onsite visit, designated for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

**Actions taken to improve quality**

If non-compliance finding(s) are identified, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan must identify the findings and specific strategies the provider will implement to ensure finding(s) have been resolved.

**Program Improvement Plan**

DCAE conducts annual performance evaluations. The evaluations process is a data-driven accountability system for adult education programs.

In a competition year, all awarded agencies are expected to meet at least 90 percent of the State Performance Target or demonstrate improvement for each educational functioning level. In continuing years, an Adult Education Program Improvement Plan (AEPIP) will be required if the DCAE determines that an eligible recipient failed to meet at least 90 percent of the state performance target or demonstrate improvement for each functioning level from the agency's previous year completion rates.

An AEPIP will be required for each educational functioning level that fails to meet the required standards and will be implemented starting in the second year of funding.

In addition to program improvement plans and other actions taken to improve quality, the following activities are available:

**New Director Training**

Provides new directors with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection and NRS reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs.

**TABE and CASAS Training/Trainers**

Through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal level gains.

**Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training**

Provides training on the fundamentals of the NRS. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.

**Technical Assistance**

Adult education Bi-monthly calls to inform adult educators of program changes, reporting announcements, and opportunities to ask questions of the DCAE staff. In addition, technical assistance papers are posted on the FDOE website.

**Teacher Training**

Provides information and resources to support instruction in the areas of GED® preparation, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading and math instructional strategies.

**ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES****States must provide written and signed certifications that:**

1.	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2.	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4.	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
5.	A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;
6.	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7.	The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8.	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

**The State Plan must include assurances that:**

1.	The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions);
2.	The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;
3.	The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; and
4.	Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

1. SF424B – Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable) (<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)



**Florida Department of Education**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Commissioner Pam Stewart



## **IX. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS—VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

---

### **(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) acknowledges the many challenges and opportunities confronting the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in preparing for a 2017-2020 state plan. The FRC recognizes the diligent efforts of the VR Director Aleisa McKinlay, and her staff for their contributions to the Council members' understanding of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) while navigating in a rapidly changing system. Although WIOA measures are being established and the rule development is still in process, the FRC supports high standards and expectations in every area of the VR system. Challenges may include: preparing for and implementing the requirements and new partnerships required under WIOA; ensuring high quality and consistent information and referrals for wait list customers; increased service availability for transition students; counselor retention; and continuing strong partnerships to facilitate best practices in policies and procedures to make the VR program even more successful. Opportunities for continued collaborative efforts are plentiful and communication has never been better between VR and the FRC; we look forward to continuing our positive relationship and to promoting increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

### **Public Forum Summary**

The FRC continues to partner with VR to hold public forums; both entities are trying alternative methods to market and advertise these events for greatest client and community participation. This collaborative effort to reach customers, vendors, businesses and other stakeholders is a continued focus. The public forums are held at each FRC quarterly meeting or when policy changes may require public input; there were five public forums conducted during the state fiscal year 2014-2015. Access to these forums is not limited to individuals in the town of the meeting but is open to the public across the state via telephone or streaming text through the internet. Areas of comment have included: transition issues; standardizing curriculum for training employment support service providers; the need for more supported employment vendors; availability of assistive technology; Order of Selection and wait list concerns; third-party cooperative agreements with school districts; legislative outreach regarding supports for people with disabilities; vendor referrals; advocacy; and opportunities for rehabilitation engineering. Future forums are planned to promote and maintain open lines of communication with VR customers, stakeholders and interested parties.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey**

A new survey contractor, Market Decisions was hired in October 2014. The FRC and VR are excited about the Customer Satisfaction Survey and the wealth of information becoming available to both entities. Unlike the past, the new survey instrument provides analysis of process in addition to customer satisfaction and may allow VR to assess and ultimately offer quality ratings of vendor performance. Survey findings are now available to all VR employees for further comparison and analysis; and area offices have been encouraged to use the reports to identify potential opportunities to make real-time improvements in their customer service provision. The FRC commends VR on achieving an excellent rating with 87% of the successfully closed cases reporting job satisfaction. Although the sample size is still small for generalization we are encouraged when compared to a national survey conducted by the Conference Board ([www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/06/20/most-americans-are-unhappy-at-work](http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/06/20/most-americans-are-unhappy-at-work)) that suggests only 47.7% of Americans are happy at work. During September 2015, focus groups are to be conducted as part of our customer survey to address satisfaction levels with the wait list and the appeals processes. Both FRC and VR are looking forward to hearing of the conversations with our customers and the future trends to be identified.

**2017-2020 Council Recommendations**

The FRC gathered to identify areas of interest of all members for input into the 2017-2020 state plan. The following recommendations rose to the level of importance in meeting the Council's federal mandates to review, analyze and advise VR.

**Recommendation 1: Transition**

The FRC applauds some of the great work of the agency in serving youth and those in transition. A June 2015 snapshot of transition age youth cases (16-21 years) presented in the VR Directors report indicated that 39% of cases statewide are serving this population. The FRC is complimentary of VR's efforts to work with this group and is encouraged by the agency's efforts to strengthen these programs and outreach further. In alignment with WIOA mandates, FRC supports early contact and the provision of Information and Referral (I&R) guidance to educate and encourage future training and employment for transition students. The Council supports VR engaging the Florida Department of Education to expand and offer additional opportunities for pre-, vocational and/or technical training for students who are interested in career technical programs. By providing more information to students and families about services available in the school districts' and VR's Third-Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) we may increase the success for each individual entering the field of employment. The Council requests increased communication and collaboration by VR representatives with each school district and increased participation in the education of options available to Florida students. The FRC supports VR initiating peer mentoring in Florida; increasing the capacity of transition service providers while encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurial options.

**Agency response:**

WIOA provides great opportunities for VR to increase transition services and opportunities to youth with disabilities. Increased Information and Referral to transition age youth is built into WIOA, and VR has already begun providing more transition service-related information to youth. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA partnerships to all school districts in Florida, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR has recently hired another transition administrator to ensure that standard information is provided consistently to all school districts, and to coordinate and monitor active and potential TPCA partnerships.

Two peer mentoring initiatives are planned at this time. A peer mentoring/ IPS project with a youth element is being developed in Broward County, and a youth-specific peer mentoring project is being developed in partnership with Florida Atlantic University. VR will keep FRC updated on their progress.

Additional initiatives are under way to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth. These include approval of CareerSource Florida to provide preplacement services, revision of Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTAC) recertification procedures, and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR is also partnering with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, Florida ARC and High School High Tech to offer more OJT and work readiness opportunities.

**Recommendation 2: Order of Selection**

WIOA fosters new opportunities for innovation and collaboration across Federal, State, and local agencies, private organization, and employers. The shift in VR's role as a core partner in the workforce development system should enhance service options and job choices for those we serve. The FRC applauds VR's efforts to serve over 39,000 people during the SFY 14-15 while on an Order of Selection. Given the heightened emphasis on the provision of service to students and youth with disabilities under WIOA, the Council requests increased communication on how customers with the most significant disabilities will be served. FRC would like to see VR increase service capacity and reduce wait times for those currently on Order of Selection.

A very important piece in serving those on a wait list is the information our customers receive when they enter the VR system. Quality information from the start can empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, inclusion and integration into society. VR continues to work on the information and referral (I&R) processes to enhance our customers' experience when they move into active services or remain on the wait list and may require additional community supports. FRC is proud of the advocacy and attention I&R has received and will continue to work with VR on the provision of effective and efficient processes during 2017-2020.

**Agency response:**

VR will continue to provide FRC with information on WIOA-related changes through quarterly director's reports and planning updates, and via email in between quarterly meetings. VR has been diligently working to reduce the number of people on the waitlist as well as time spent on the waitlist, and both have decreased over the past year. It is anticipated that the Category 2 waitlist will be empty by January 2016. As noted, VR continues to improve its information and referral materials, and welcomes FRC's feedback on this, as well as their recent offer to help with further revisions.

**Recommendation 3: Job Placement Initiatives**

The FRC has encouraged increased use of rehabilitation engineering services in the area of employment. Home and vehicle modifications are important but if the end goal is employment, there is definitely a way rehabilitation engineering can make a positive change. The FRC recommends VR evaluate the rehabilitation engineering contract or the different types of services rehabilitation engineering contractors may offer to determine if there are incentives to increasing technology services directly tied to employment.

FRC commends VR for the hiring of twelve Area Business Relations Specialists under a Business Relations Program Administrator. VR should continue to strengthen engagement efforts with business leaders to develop long-range employment options for our customers and ways to maximize the employers' return on investment. The FRC appreciates the leadership of VR in collaborative efforts to develop and supervise the Abilities Help Desk; also VR's continued efforts to identify growing employment markets, potential areas for workplace re-engineering and opportunities for job customization. FRC encourages VR develop a deeper understanding of customer strengths and develop tools to communicate succinctly to potential employers. Focusing on the strengths may help businesses design job descriptions and identify specific training or educational opportunities with the goal of expanding the number of businesses interested in hiring VR customers to find productive and meaningful jobs. VR has also embraced and worked to increase On-the-Job Training (OJT) options for transition and post-secondary students. Emphasis on the availability of accommodations, increasing self-employment options and the use of the Discovery program models will also increase customer job possibilities and financial independence. Once all the employment specialists are hired and the Business Relations program becomes more active the FRC anticipates increased placement and employment returns for businesses, VR and its customers.

The FRC would encourage that all eligible individuals have access to Phase 2 supported-employment services. The Council is concerned with the limitations and restrictions of long-term funding and follow-along supports and encourages investigation of stronger resources. Council members would like to recommend additional supports be made available for job customization and that additional Innovation and Expansion grants be offered within the state to meet the growing needs. VR's efforts to provide services in rural areas of Florida are recognized and encouraged.

**Agency response:**

VR is currently working with the University of South Florida to update their contract, with the intent to strengthen the use of rehabilitation engineering services for VR customers. As with all services provided or funded by VR, environmental modifications are authorized on a case-by-case basis, according to the specific customer's employment needs and goals outlined in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). As part of IPE development, VR uses the Engineer Evaluation to identify services needed.

VR has formalized its Business Relations Program, and its vision is 'to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers'. Efforts are currently focused on defining and customizing services to employers and creating strategic partnerships to support workforce needs. VR anticipates that this will increase competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities.



The Supported Employment Service model is founded on two primary premises. Supported Employment assumes that all individuals, regardless of their disability, have the capacity and should be afforded the opportunity to engage in competitive integrated employment with appropriate support services. The second concept is the need for the support services to be available so that individuals are able to be successful in their employment outcomes for the long term, not just while VR is able to assist.

The recognition of the need for Follow Along or Extended services (Phase 2) is critical and VR has devoted trainings for Counselors to recognize all the opportunities for funding Phase 2, such as Private pay, Social Security Work Incentives, local community grants, as well as giving priority to Natural and Employer Supports. VR has also recognized that quality placements that are individually developed require less support in Phase 2 and make it much more likely that natural supports can provide the required supports.

VR has also worked to expand the Discovery as a person-centered planning tool that helps provide more opportunities for supported employment. In addition, VR is now adding a Customized Placement Benchmark as an option with a higher provider reimbursement rate for this benchmark. Part of the approval and success of that benchmark is that natural supports are prioritized and developed from the beginning of the job negotiation process.

VR has the option under WIOA to provide up to four years of extended services for youth, if necessary, and if funding is available. The youth programs that VR is invested in are anticipated to help young adults move into supported employment with more skills, which will reduce their need for Phase 2 Services. The more experiences and work skills that individuals have the opportunity to develop, the increased likelihood of their supported employment placement being a successful experience.

It should be noted that the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) received a \$1,000,000 allocation to provide employment related supports for individuals on APD's waiting list. These funds may be used for employment and employment-related services such as Phase 2, Internships, transportation, work clothes etc. VR is working with APD to help identify individuals who may be mutual customers who could benefit from this service. While it is not available to all VR customers, it is an additional funding option for Phase 2 services so that counselors are comfortable that there is a reasonable expectation of those necessary supports. VR will continue to work with APD and the Department of Children and Families' Mental Health Program Office to seek additional resources for Phase 2 of Supported Employment services.

More research and discussion is needed to determine where Innovation and Expansion grants can best serve Florida's jobseekers with disabilities. Opportunities, when identified, will be offered through formal procurement processes. VR recognizes this as an opportunity that could be beneficial and complimentary to WIOA-related initiatives.

**Recommendation 4: Public Awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation**

There is no more important time to make sure that the VR system is visible and understood than now. The FRC recommends that a media campaign be developed to share not only the history of this important national program but also to share Florida specific services, successes and accomplishments. The availability of VR on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) is helpful and increases accessibility but there is still a need to expand information offered in multiple languages to decrease any potential barriers. FRC suggests an accessible online application system be investigated and implemented. Although not everyone may choose to access an online application, it should be an option. Feedback from the customer satisfaction survey indicates that some individuals have difficulty completing paperwork.

Council members are excited about engaging businesses as mandated partners in the implementation of WIOA and will support VR in the outreach and engagement of these stakeholders to meet their needs as well as finding jobs for the citizens of Florida.

**Agency response:**

VR acknowledges the need to better promote and market the valuable services it offers to jobseekers with disabilities. VR welcomes recommendations on documents and information needed in other languages, and the specific languages needed.

VR has engaged in multiple discussions with FRC about an online application. VR agrees that an accessible, online application would be valuable and has already started researching this option. However, WIOA modifications to case management and other IT systems have priority at this time. As VR has previously relayed to FRC, the online application will be further researched and discussed once WIOA modifications are complete.

**Recommendation 5: Counselor Recruitment, Retention**

The VR strategic plan SFY 2014-2016 contains a number of important areas that concentrate efforts on developing VR leadership candidates as well as an agency-wide workforce succession management plan. With potential changes from WIOA on staffing, FRC encourages VR to identify new ways to recruit employees while implementing long-term retention strategies. The Council supports VR in their efforts to have the highest level of counselor education and skill level available to support the best practices and quality of care so needed for this vulnerable population. This is critical especially in light of the continued level of counselor turn-over and staff retirement.

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

**Agency response:**

WIOA provides more flexibility in counselor education and credential requirements, which is anticipated to expand recruiting opportunities. VR will be able to hire candidates with business or related backgrounds who also have experience working with people with disabilities. Leadership Development and Succession Management projects are intended to increase VR employee retention while providing valuable professional development. Advocacy components are included in VR counselor training currently, and it is the understanding of VR that the FRC will develop additional content related to advocacy so that it can be delivered through the TED learning management system.

**Recommendation 6: Mediation and Conflict Resolution**

The FRC is pleased that Florida VR is one of only a few states that offer ombudsman services to its customers. The FRC continues to promote conflict resolution strategies including mediation prior to formal appeals. These strategies promote the early resolution of conflicts in an effective manner that will restore the relationship and move the rehabilitation process forward for the individual with a disability. The Council encourages VR to separate methods of reporting conflict resolutions to stakeholders for this may emphasize the many avenues open to our customers such as the Ombudsman office, an administrative review, mediation or an appeal.

**Agency response:**

VR has already agreed to report Dispute Resolution data in the manner requested by FRC. Additional measures taken by VR to alleviate this concern include multiple discussions and reviews of dispute resolution practices by FDOE legal counsel, presentation by and open discussion with legal counsel during the August quarterly meeting, and adding a series of survey items to the customer satisfaction survey that further identify customers' knowledge of options available if they do not agree with VR decisions about services.

**FRC Strategic Plan Accomplishments**

The FRC established its strategic plan in 2011 in accordance with the VR and the Florida Department of Education plans. Progress and areas of success and improvement are reviewed by the Council on an annual basis with new objectives added as appropriate.

Goal 1: To enhance VR Support and Service Systems – The FRC has had an impact on the VR implementation and review of policy and procedures; input on due process conflict resolutions; and increasing customer education and self-advocacy. Through constant opportunities for customers to comment at public forums and through the Market Decisions Survey the Council has provided insights into support and service systems effectiveness and efficiency. The Council focus and areas of concern regarding this goal are further expressed in Recommendations 5 and 6 provided above. FRC looks forward to working with VR on service enhancements and the implementation of best practices as appropriate to strengthen support and service systems within the agency.



Goal 2: To establish and strengthen collaborative strategic partnerships – The Council has developed in the past year a new recognition award for a group of most valued partners, our VR Counselors and front-line staff. It is important to appreciate these dedicated individuals for going above and beyond VR service expectations. The Council also has the annual Stephen R. Wise Award which recognizes a dedicated statewide leader, champion and advocate who embodies the qualities of passion and professionalism through public service making a significant difference in the life for persons with disabilities. Strategic partnerships are enhanced through the quarterly public forum invitation distribution and attendance; FRC member involvement in the Student Advisory Council (SAC) meetings; strategic planning and consortium support of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) Employment First initiative; and other engagements with strategic partners such as the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. National level involvement has also been another way for FRC to obtain and increase stronger strategic partnerships and awareness of best practices. We have several Council members who represent Florida on the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) discussion groups on transitioning youth and the national WIOA implementation; we also had an FRC employee present at the Annual National Summit on VR Performance Management Excellence on the topic of Strategic Partnerships between Councils and VR agencies. The Council focus and areas of collaboration are further expressed in Recommendation 4 provided above.

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

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

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



## **(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

### Overview

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services throughout the state, including Transition Youth services that expand and improve vocational rehabilitation options for eligible customers. VR has entered into Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) with some local school districts, but services are not currently available in all areas of the state. TPCA and other VR Transition Youth services align with the Pre-Employment Transition Services required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The State Plan cannot assure that the expanded services provided through the TPCAs will be available in all political subdivisions (school districts) of the state. A Waiver of Statewideness is requested in this State Plan.

### **Types of Services Provided**

#### School and Community-Based Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

On an annual basis, VR offers new TPCAs to all 67 school districts in the state of Florida. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA to all districts, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR currently has TPCAs with 20 school districts and these arrangements expire in June 2016. The one-year arrangement will provide community-based work experiences to eligible students who have Supported Employment (SE) service needs identified in their Individual Educational Plan and Individualized Plan for Employment. This model reimburses school districts for services provided to VR-eligible students with the most significant disabilities and facilitates a seamless transition into postsecondary employment with supports.

On-the-Job Training (OJT), through VR providers, delivers needed community-based work experiences to VR-eligible students who do not require the intense supports provided through the TPCA. OJT services are available statewide.

#### Written Assurances

VR assures the Rehabilitation Services Administration that it has TPCAs with certain school districts and will provide written assurances as required. Specifically, each arrangement is formalized through the contract procurement process and contains the following:

1. The local school district will certify to VR that funds used for match funds are non-federal and are not used for match in any other federally- or state-assisted project or program.
2. VR approval will be obtained for all TPCA services.
3. All local school districts with TPCAs will abide by the state's Order of Selection policy.
4. TPCA services are services not typically provided by local school districts, and TPCA services are only available to persons applying for, or already receiving VR services.
5. All other state plan requirements, including those found in the Unified State Plan required under WIOA, will apply to all services provided under the scope of the arrangement.
6. Program expenditures and employees providing services under the cooperative arrangement are under the administrative supervision of VR.



### Third Party Cooperative Arrangement

During state fiscal year 2015-16, VR has arrangements with the school districts in the following counties:

- |             |               |               |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Baker    | 8. Gulf       | 15. Nassau    |
| 2. Bay      | 9. Hendry     | 16. Putnam    |
| 3. Bradford | 10. Jefferson | 17. St. Johns |
| 4. Calhoun  | 11. Leon      | 18. Taylor    |
| 5. Columbia | 12. Liberty   | 19. Volusia   |
| 6. Flagler  | 13. Manatee   | 20. Wakulla   |
| 7. Gadsden  | 14. Monroe    |               |

**The current arrangements will expire on June 30, 2016. New Third Party Cooperative Arrangements will be offered to all 67 school districts prior to that time.**

### **(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System**

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) maintains cooperative agreements with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. The state of Florida no longer participates in the National Rural Development Program. A description of current VR partners and agreements is below.

#### The Able Trust

The mission of The Able Trust is to assist citizens with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation process. This includes administering grants, as well as educational and public awareness programs. VR customers and other Floridians with disabilities receive direct support through funded community rehabilitation program employment projects and individual grants from The Able Trust. The Able Trust is a non-profit corporation, and VR does not provide any Title I funds to The Able Trust. The agreement promotes cooperation between The Able Trust and VR, which includes as provided for in Florida Statutes, the annual submission of The Able Trust's budget, annual report, annual audit, and any changes to the Articles of Incorporation or by-laws to the VR director. The Able Trust informs the VR director of all board meetings, as required by Florida statute. VR reviews the above documents and makes the necessary certification, based on statute.

#### Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The cooperative agreement between the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and VR contains a detailed and specific focus on collaborative planning and funding of Supported Employment services. Specifically, the agreement addresses the transition of secondary students to the community, to provide a seamless transition of services. The cooperative agreement includes local strategies and joint obligations for both agencies.

Both agencies have a common goal of assisting eligible persons to achieve greater independence through employment. The specific goal of this agreement is to coordinate support and services throughout the state, maintaining maximum customer satisfaction and informed choice. This agreement is currently being updated to ensure compliance with the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations.

Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, Florida Department of Health

VR and the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program have agreed to expand referrals between the two agencies in order to improve employment outcomes for persons with a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. The effort will include joint statewide training for those involved in the project and identification of local referral liaisons.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc.

VR and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. agree to share specific information about their customers to optimize service delivery. Both agree to specific procedures that facilitate the delivery of services to their respective and mutual customers. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology offers an Alternative Financing Program for the purchase of assistive technology to all residents of Florida who have disabilities.

Florida Independent Living Council, Inc.

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

Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

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

Florida Small Business Development Center Network

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

Institutions of Higher Education

VR has Memoranda of Understanding with the Presidents of Florida's public universities and the Florida College System. Both Memoranda outline the purposes, roles and responsibilities of VR and the educational institutions, as well as financial and programmatic responsibilities. The Memoranda of Understanding provides information regarding financial assistance, sharing of assessment findings, accommodations, rehabilitation technology services, academic advisement, counseling, confidentiality, and other topics.

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe is located in southern Georgia and is the recipient of the Federal Section 121 Grant under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. There is not a 121 program in Florida. However, VR and the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate services for eligible Native Americans with disabilities residing on or near the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe Tama Reservation within a 150-mile radius. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of both groups, including services for joint customers and technical assistance.

Mental Health Program, Florida Department of Children and Families

VR coordinates with the state mental health authority to assist customers who have mental illnesses. One of these is participation on the Florida Assertive Community Treatment Team, a community-based, outreach-oriented method of delivering services to individuals with mental illnesses coordinated by the Mental Health Program. VR provides staff liaisons with many of these teams to help serve this group of customers in a comprehensive manner. In addition, VR is an active member of the State Mental Health Planning Council of Florida. The cooperative agreement promotes coordination so that appropriate services can be delivered to maximize customer choice and satisfaction. This agreement is currently being updated to ensure compliance with new WIOA regulations.

Division of Blind Services (FDBS), Florida Department of Education

Both VR and FDBS serve individuals with visual impairments. This agreement specifies the roles and responsibilities of each division, including those for individuals with one-eye pathology, bilateral visual impairment, multiple disabilities, and for individuals who are deaf-blind.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education; Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Health; Department of Economic Opportunity

The Florida Interagency Agreement for the Transfer of Assistive Technology, signed in 2006, establishes a framework for an efficient transition of technology as individuals with disabilities move through the continuum from educational services to employment. Specifically, the agreement ensures children and youth with disabilities and their families, educators, and employers are informed about the continued use and transfer of assistive technology devices. These devices may remain with the person as he or she moves from home to school and to post-school activities in order to assist in meeting transition needs. The agreement outlines the conditions for coordination, the authority for transfer of property by local education agencies, financial responsibilities, and other topics.

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Employment Standards Administration

Both agencies agree to further the common goal of providing VR equal employment opportunities and protecting against discrimination. VR will provide expertise on matters relating to disability issues and employment, cross-referral of individuals with disabilities, and will participate in interagency training programs, staff meetings, and conferences. Both agencies agree to a coordinated public outreach effort.

Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises, Inc. (PRIDE)

VR uses the services and manufactured items produced in correctional work programs through PRIDE. PRIDE is a Florida corporation that provides these goods and services as a state-use contracting program. A similar product or service of comparable price and quality, found necessary for use by a state agency, may not be purchased from a source other than PRIDE. In addition, contracts between VR and any private vendor require all items be purchased through PRIDE. This is consistent with Section 946.515, Florida Statutes.

Rehabilitation Foundation of Northwest Florida

The purpose of this agreement is to maximize funding of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with physical disabilities residing in northwest Florida. The Foundation contributes \$25,000 to VR toward meeting its non-federal funding requirements. In turn, VR will allocate an additional \$92,250 in federal funds to match the Foundation's contribution for vocational rehabilitation services in the following northwest Florida counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton.



The intent of these cooperative efforts is to increase the services leading to quality competitive employment outcomes that are responsive to the strengths, resources, interests, and capabilities of individuals with disabilities residing in northwest Florida. VR agrees to provide quarterly reports of expenditures to the Foundation's Trustees. Each report will include the number of individuals served and a description of services provided under the terms of the agreement.

#### Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act

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

#### United States Department of Veterans Affairs

The need to serve Florida veterans who have disabilities led to the development of an agreement between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and VR. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of VR and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It clarifies which agency can provide specific services. It also includes information regarding shared planning, joint activities, and coordination.

### **(d) Coordination with Education Officials**

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) updated the interagency agreement coordinating transition services with state education officials in July 2006. It is a state-level agreement, including agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and going to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. The agencies listed below agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas, and current initiatives, collaborate on training and special projects, cooperate in planning and budgeting, and generally support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial. These agencies include:

- Florida Department of Education:
  - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS)
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
  - Division of Blind Services (FDBS)
- Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)
- Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services
- Florida Department of Children and Families, Mental Health Services

This formal interagency agreement serves as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation among local education agencies and local offices of VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services.



VR has dedicated five program staff to administer the VR Transition Youth program. An administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Administrators coordinate and plan for effective transition services delivery with VR staff and external stakeholders statewide. The VR Transition Youth program is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about VR transition services at conferences statewide in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency's role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.

Additionally, the VR Transition Youth program provides transition-related technical assistance to the Florida Rehabilitation Council. An administrator serves as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee and works closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: the Transition Education Network. Project 10 is funded through a grant from BEESS to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps implement secondary transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. The interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates, and employers working together to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.

The VR Director or designee serves on the State Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Education of Exceptional Students. This committee is administered by BEESS. The SAC includes parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, educators and administrators from secondary and postsecondary institutions as well as foster care and juvenile justice representatives. The SAC also includes representatives of various state agencies that provide transition and other services to children, youth and young adults with disabilities. The committee advises the state education agency on what children with disabilities need and helps them develop corrective action plans to address findings in related federal monitoring reports. The committee also helps the state education agency develop evaluations and policies, implement policies, and report data. The committee may comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the state relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

The VR Transition Youth program provides individualized services to help eligible students with disabilities with a seamless transition from high school to an identified career path. Under WIOA, every student with a disability has the opportunity to participate in Pre-Employment Transition Services including sponsored career exploration, work readiness training, and work experiences. The focus is to develop work skills, practice social skills, and acquire a network of community supports while the student is still in high school. VR services delivered under WIOA do not remove, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a *free and appropriate public education* (FAPE) for students served under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.



The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as High School High Tech, Project SEARCH, and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and On-the-Job Training (OJT), often lead to successful employment. For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities.

VR adopted an early referral/application process for transition students during SFY 2008-2009 to better coordinate with state and local education agencies. Brochures for the VR Transition Youth Program are available to students and families so they can begin gathering information at age 14. The referral process for VR services was updated for SFY 2015 so that students with disabilities may begin to receive VR services at age 15. Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping out of school may be referred at any age. This early referral process allows the counselor to develop a rapport with the transition student and family, explore vocational options and comparable benefits, and begin necessary guidance and counseling.

#### **Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities**

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Supported Employment IPE, Individual Support Plan, and/or Care Coordination Plans are completed or updated as early as possible prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome.

VR counselors, with assistance from VR technicians, serve as representatives to work with all public high schools statewide and any private high school requesting assistance. They provide outreach and vocational rehabilitation services orientation to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services. Only the counselor may determine a student's eligibility for VR services, develop an approved IPE, and sponsor the delivery of necessary transition services to help the student with planning, preparing for, and achieving successful employment.

#### **Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect To:**

##### **Employment First**

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



#### Technical Assistance and Consultation

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

#### Transition Planning by VR and Educational Agency Representatives for Development and Completion of the Individual Education Plan

Local education agencies work collaboratively with VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process. Local education agencies that are considering transition services during the Individual Educational Plan meeting will invite representatives from any other agency who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, after obtaining permission from the parent, guardian, or age-of-majority student. If the agency representative does not attend the meeting, the school will do its best to get someone else to come. If the agency representative will not attend the meeting, the school will then look for alternative ways to provide for the student's transition needs. The local education agency must reconvene the Transition Individual Educational Plan team to identify alternative strategies for providing a student's transition needs if an agency fails to do so.

In order to plan effective transition services for students with disabilities, it is essential that all invited partner agencies encourage and support participation in the Transition Individual Educational Plan (IEP) process.

VR invests 35-40 percent of its statewide staffing resources in transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the rehabilitation information and billing systems for transition students' data collection were implemented on April 22, 2015 to collect transition data elements and track expenditures for transition youth. The Rehabilitation Services Administration will announce any additional data enhancements to meet WIOA requirements once the associated rules and regulations have been finalized. The enhancements will enable VR to conduct differential analysis to better evaluate agency performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.



### Roles and Responsibilities

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

1. Local education agencies provide a *Free and Appropriate Public Education* for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities.
2. VR and FDBS assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome.
3. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities tries to “reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment,” (Chapter 393, Florida Statutes). Additionally, “to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment.” If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in Florida rule.
4. Children’s Medical Services ensures a smooth and successful transition process to adult healthcare services and providers for youth and young adults with special healthcare needs.
5. Mental Health Services, in partnership with families and the community, provides a system of care that enables children and adults with mental health or emotional disabilities to live successfully in the community, become self-sufficient or to attain self-sufficiency at adulthood, and realize their full potential. Mental health support and services enable adults and transitioning students to participate in community activities such as employment and other valued community roles.

### Specific Purpose

Specific intent of the interagency agreement is to:

1. Provide guidance to the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services’ front-line employees, when serving students transitioning from school to work or postsecondary activities.
2. Provide information to parents/students so they know what they can expect from the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services during the transition process.
3. Provide parameters to the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services’ administrators/managers/nursing supervisors when developing, negotiating, and implementing local cooperative agreements.
4. Encourage and support the participation of all agency personnel in the IEP process at the local level through the development of guidelines, policies, and/or procedures.



### Financial Responsibilities

The Department of Education, VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

### Conditions and Terms of Reimbursement

If a non-education agency fails to provide or pay for services for which they are responsible, and which are also considered special education and related services, the local education agency (or state agency responsible for developing the student's IEP) shall provide or pay for these services to the student in a timely manner. The local education agency or state agency may then claim reimbursement for the services from the non-education agency that was responsible for the provision of the services and failed to provide or pay for these services, and that agency shall reimburse the local education agency or state agency in accordance with the terms of this agreement.

## **Procedures for Outreach to and Identification of Students with Disabilities who need Transition Services**

### Outreach and Identification of Students

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to enter into written agreements with VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services employees, on the outreach methods used to inform students with disabilities who may need, and could benefit from these agencies.

Brochures, flyers, website resources, presentations, transition fairs, or informational letters are available to the local education agency, students, and their parents or guardians, to explain the role that VR and other agencies play in the transition process, and the agencies' referral/application policies and procedures.

VR has executed 20 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) for SFY 2015. The goal of these arrangements is to create new or expand existing transition services with a vocational rehabilitation focus. The costs are shared between the agencies. In order for the cooperating agency to receive matching vocational rehabilitation dollars, it must provide a cash match of non-federal funds. Recipients of the TPCA began providing job coaching to eligible students with a Supported Employment IPE in SFY 2011. In SFY 2014, TPCA were redesigned to serve only those students with the most significant disabilities who require Supported Employment services to become employed.



### **(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has a variety of agreements with private non-profit organizations. These include contracts, rate agreements, and other cooperative, non-financial agreements.

Specifically, VR contracts for three core components: employment services, supported employment, and On-the-Job Training (OJT). Additionally, some VR services are purchased through registered vendors. All new vendors/providers, whether through a contractual or vendor relationship, must go through a registration and approval process. VR reviews the qualifications of vendors providing services to its customers in order to ensure the quality of these services, as well as the safety of the public. In addition to approving and registering vendor/provider services, VR conducts employment verifications on all customer placements facilitated by vendors/contract providers.

VR policy ensures that customers have a choice of qualified service providers to select from. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages, and other communication skills. Customers have a choice of necessary services, service providers, and settings in which to receive the services included in the written Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, VR has approximately 190 rate contracts that include employment, supported employment, and OJT services. Additionally, VR maintains the following contracts and/or agreements:

- 16 agreements with the Centers for Independent Living located throughout the state to provide independent living services
- 20 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local school districts
- Additional contracts with agencies for services such as delegable VR services, outreach for migrant and seasonal farm workers, interpreting services, and rehabilitation engineering

VR currently has one Innovation and Expansion (I & E) project through the University of South Florida, Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology. This project involves the use of virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities.

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

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



Throughout the state, many VR employees serve as liaisons with specific groups and organizations. Individuals are referred to those groups if it is determined that they can benefit from their services. Services are coordinated with numerous non-profit hospitals and clinics for referrals and medical assistance. Foundations and associations such as the Easter Seals Society, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Kidney Foundation, Brain Injury Association of Florida, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Network on Disability of Florida, and others provide individual and family support groups and disability education to mutual customers.

It is the intent of VR to continue with the above referenced contractual agreements, cooperative arrangements, and liaison relationships through FFY 2016.

#### **(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) currently has cooperative agreements with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Department of Children and Families Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program and the Department of Education.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires VR to enter into an additional cooperative agreement with the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan and the agency primarily responsible for providing services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To meet this requirement VR will be updating the cooperative agreement with APD as well as including the Agency for Healthcare Administration in an agreement specifically focused on Supported Employment services.

VR is working closely with APD to develop competitive integrated employment alternatives for individuals receiving services in a segregated setting. VR will provide technical assistance and support as APD expands these program options. Under WIOA requirements, VR will provide or coordinate information and education for individuals receiving services in sheltered workshops receiving sub-minimum wages. VR is working with APD to refine the referral process so that youth and adults have the opportunity to experience competitive integrated employment prior to entering a sheltered workshop that may pay sub-minimum wages.

VR is currently a partner with other state agencies and organizations in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure individuals with disabilities are offered employment on a preferred basis in planning their lives. Employment First is consistent with VR's belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports.



Executive Order 13-284 (Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities) was signed by the Governor of Florida in October 2013. The order mandates that an Interagency Cooperative Agreement be developed and requires agencies and organizations to participate in the agreement. VR is one of the mandated partners and played a significant role in drafting the order. The following agencies were named as mandatory partners and have signed this agreement formalizing efforts to improve and increase opportunities for people with disabilities.

- The Department of Education-Division of Blind Services
- The Department of Education-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Department of Education-Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- The Department of Children and Families-Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- The Department of Economic Opportunity
- CareerSource Florida
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
- RESPECT of Florida

VR collaborates and contracts with approximately 190 private, non-profit Community Rehabilitation Programs across the state of Florida. Contracts were recently revised to allow any qualified program to provide supported employment services, which is anticipated to increase the capacity for these programs to provide SE services.

In addition to these collaborations, VR works in partnership with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment.

Collaborations such as High School/ High Tech (HSHT), Project SEARCH, and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and On-the-Job Training (OJT), often lead to successful employment.

For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these services.



Six broad-based objectives govern Florida's interagency supported employment programs.

1. Continue to develop and enhance supported employment for persons with the most significant disabilities. The state system for the provision of supported employment reflects: (a) mutually agreeable definitions of the services to be provided; (b) administrative responsibility of the intensive component of supported employment services to eligible individuals as the primary responsibility of VR for individuals with the most significant disabilities; and (c) administrative responsibility of the extended services component as the primary responsibility of other stakeholders, including APD and the Department of Children and Families, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program.
2. Continue to improve the statewide management of supported employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding while ensuring accountability. This process will provide a coordinated system of program development for supported employment services.
3. Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring a comprehensive, continuous, efficient, and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality, and technical assistance.
4. Identify issues, policies, and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of individuals with the most significant disabilities, and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.
5. Continue to implement an interagency planning process for budget coordination, which defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
6. Support the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work if provided appropriate services and supports and that a team approach is needed to facilitate quality and appropriate services.

#### Supported Employment Services

VR is responsible for Phase 1 of Supported Employment services. In Phase 1, VR provides intensive vocational services until the individual and employer are satisfied with the supported employment placement, and then the individual phases to a plan for extended services. Supported employment services consist of intensive, time-limited vocational rehabilitation services (the responsibility of VR) and extended services, also known as Phase 2. Funding for Phase 2 services is provided by other sources that may be, but are not limited to, APD, the Department of Children and Families Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program, natural supports or other identified funding sources.



### Extended Services

The purpose of extended services is to maintain the individual in supported competitive employment, enhance the individual's involvement in the workplace culture, and provide supports for career advancement. The nature of services provided during the intensive and extended services of supported employment may be similar to the initial services but may differ in intensity.

VR and its partners continuously seek alternative methods to provide extended services (e.g. social security incentives, natural supports, etc.). VR has encouraged supported employment providers to focus on developing natural supports and to focus efforts on encouraging employers to accept the support role since this is the most natural arrangement for employers and VR customers.

Implementation of WIOA will provide the opportunity to fund Extended Services for youth with the most significant disabilities for a time period of up to four years, if necessary, and funding permits. Allowances would be made for individuals who, while receiving extended services, require re-intervention of intensive services through VR because they have destabilized on the job. When appropriate, VR will again assume the responsibility and cost of providing intensive vocational services, including necessary job-related support services.

### **(g) Coordination with Employers**

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has formalized a Business Relations Program, with the vision to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships will lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers.

Efforts are underway in the Business Relations Program to define and customize services to employers, create strategic partnerships to support workforce needs, and establish an employment-focused culture within the rehabilitation process. Listed below are the program's goals, objectives, and strategies.

#### **Goal 1: Become the foremost recognized and trusted resource for employers' disability inclusion needs.**

Objective: Increase the number of employers engaged as business partners.

Strategies:

1. Develop and use a standard business needs assessment.
2. Develop and use a business customer satisfaction tool.
3. Staff and train a team that is responsive to business. The team includes: the program administrator; a senior VR consultant; a business projects specialist; and 12 business relations representatives located across the state, two in each of VR's six administrative areas.
4. Implement a business customer relationship management tool.
5. Define the services offered to employers and customize them to meet business needs.
6. Create statewide consistency in business relations outreach and services.



7. Use targeted marketing to engage employers across multiple industries.
8. Participate in business-led organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, US Business Leadership Network, etc.
9. Create strategic practices that can be replicated.
10. Align services with the Workforce Development Boards and other community partners.
11. Participate in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's National Employment Team (NET) and the NET-Southeast regional team to share referrals and best practices.
12. Engage with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners to share best practices.

**Goal 2: Become a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.**

Objective: Increase referrals of qualified applicants to business partners.

Strategies:

1. Facilitate direct access to qualified applicants through business relationships.
2. Market career opportunities internally to VR staff.
3. Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk for applicant-matching services for employers.
4. Coordinate support services provided by VR contractors.
5. Provide a seamless connection to VR services and qualified applicants across a company's footprint locally, regionally, statewide, and nationally through the NET.
6. Engage in local talent pool coordination with other agencies to meet businesses' workforce needs.
7. Participate with the NET and the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) to create increased opportunities for VR jobseekers and employers recruiting VR jobseekers.
8. Collaborate with business to create a pipeline of qualified candidates.

**Goal 3: Expand career opportunities for VR candidates.**

Objective: Prepare ready-to-work applicants for in-demand careers and jobs that are available now.

Strategies:

1. Meet with business and industry to assess workforce needs to better align training with those needs.
2. Communicate information from employers about business needs and qualification requirements to VR staff.
3. Engage in sector partnerships.
4. Provide information to VR staff about in-demand jobs and high growth industries and sectors using labor market information.
5. Collaborate with business and education to determine industry recognized training opportunities and inform VR staff about them.
6. Collaborate with WIOA core partners to share resources and best practices.
7. Generate opportunities for worksite training with business partners.

**(h) Interagency Cooperation**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to enter into an additional cooperative agreement with the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan and the agency primarily responsible for providing services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To meet this requirement VR will be updating the cooperative agreement with The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) as well as including the Agency for Healthcare Administration in an agreement specifically focused on Supported Employment services.

VR is working closely with APD to develop competitive integrated employment alternatives for individuals receiving services in a segregated setting. VR will provide technical assistance and support as APD expands these program options. Under WIOA requirements, VR will provide or coordinate information and education for individuals receiving services in sheltered workshops receiving sub-minimum wages. VR is working with APD to refine the referral process so that youth and adults have the opportunity to experience competitive integrated employment prior to entering a sheltered workshop that may pay sub-minimum wages.



### (i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

#### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

Assurance of an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessional personnel is the major driver for the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) Human Resource Development Section. Data from numerous sources is used to determine current and projected needs, as well as VR's progress toward meeting them. The table below includes VR personnel and turnover data for SFY 2014-15, and projected staffing requirements for SFY 2015-16. It should be noted that positions are vacated for many reasons, including termination, promotion, lateral position transfers, or retirement. VR continues to employ strategies to address turnover as well as develop and prepare staff for advancement opportunities.

**Figure 9.01**  
**VR Personnel and Projected Staffing Needs**

<b>Personnel Category*</b>	<b>Number of Personnel, as of 10/1/15</b>	<b>Turnover Rate for SFY 2014-15</b>	<b>**Projected Staffing Needs for SFY 2015-16</b>
Counselor Staff	415	29%	120
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities	360	23%	84
Administrative Staff	156	17%	27
Total Full-time Equivalents	931		
Contracted Counselor Staff	84		
Total Contracted Field Staff	148		

\*Categories are based on RSA-2 Report definitions, and positions included in each category.

\*\*This number is an annual average derived by multiplying the number of positions for the job category by the percentage of vacated positions.

Staffing needs for Transition Youth Program counselors remains consistent with overall counselor staffing projections. When factoring in population growth, the projected five-year staffing needs are slightly higher than noted above, but would require that VR be provided with additional FTEs, which is unlikely in the current economic climate.

The state's automated People First personnel system maintains employment histories to help project human resource needs. The state continues to make available a deferred retirement option program (DROP) that allows individuals to continue working for the state for five years beyond their original retirement date. Because it is impossible to anticipate how many individuals will accept the deferral option, projecting future employment needs is difficult. However, it is known that there are currently 73 individuals in DROP, 66 individuals with 30 or more years of service, and 119 individuals over the age of 62.

VR collects data from the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to calculate the counselor-customer ratio. This is another tool for assessing current and projected staffing needs. The average counselor-customer caseload is 1:81 in relation to assisting customers from the application phase to case closure. This ratio is based on both regular counselor positions and contracted counselor positions.



VR uses People First and RIMS data, as well as internal reports, to obtain:

- The number and classification of authorized positions for each local unit and state headquarters in relation to the number of individuals served
- The number and classification of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The projected number and classification of personnel who will be needed in five years to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The state institutions of higher education that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by program type
- The number of students in each of these institutions, by program type
- The number of students graduating from each program and the credentials they have received

In order to ensure the continuity of quality rehabilitation services and to address employee vacancies and turnover in particularly difficult to fill geographic areas, VR has contracted for employees. The contracts ensure that qualified personnel are hired to provide necessary rehabilitation services. A VR counselor/analyst reviews each case and performs/authorizes administrative activities that federal regulations (34 CFR 361.13) specify are the responsibility of VR, and cannot be delegated to private providers. These activities include:

- All decisions affecting eligibility for VR, the nature and scope of available services and the provision of these services, and the suspension, reduction, and termination of these services
- The determination to close the records of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome
- Policy formulation and implementation
- Allocation and expenditure of VR funds
- Participation as a partner in the CareerSource Florida service delivery system

Described in the following table is information from institutions of higher education in Florida that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals, categorized by institution and type of program.



**Figure 9.02**  
**Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education**

Institution, Program Type and Degree	Students Currently Enrolled	VR/RSA Sponsored Employees	VR/RSA Sponsored Graduates	Previous Year Graduates
Florida Atlantic University- Graduate-level Rehabilitation Training Program; MEd and PhD	MEd- 20 PhD- 4	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 6 PhD- 0
Florida International University- Rehabilitation Counseling Program; MS in Counselor Education	MS- 9	MS- 0	MS- 0	MS- 0
University of South Florida- Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program; MA	MA- 147	MA- 1	MA- 0	MA- 50

#### **Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

VR maintains close relationships with universities including minority institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and disability-specific organizations. VR employees collaborate with universities in securing grant funding, invite university employees to help with training and education activities, and provide practicum and internship slots for students.

VR acknowledges that it will not be able to recruit an adequate number of qualified rehabilitation counselors to replace those retiring and departing for other reasons. VR is currently engaged in the activities indicated below to address recruitment, preparation, and retention of counselors.

#### **Personnel Standards**

There is not a state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. VR, in conjunction with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) established the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) educational eligibility requirement as its standard.

Efforts are made to recruit and hire counselors who meet the CRC educational eligibility status. If VR is unsuccessful in finding enough qualified applicants, it will accept those who meet the minimal initial standard for providing counseling and guidance services. The individual(s) must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and one year of experience counseling individuals with disabilities. Alternative majors other than social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science may be considered along with the minimum qualification requirements for the position. When evaluating the suitability of alternative majors, the hiring authority should consider the major area of study's applicability to the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. A master's degree from an accredited university in a social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science can substitute for the year of required experience.



The state of Florida allows employees to use a tuition waiver to enroll in six hours (or less) of courses per semester on a space-available basis at public universities. This approach is how many counselors worked to reach the CSPD standard until fall 2006. As recently as five years ago, Florida had six Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) programs, five of which were CORE-accredited. As of 2015, Florida now has three CORE-accredited programs (Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida, and the recently accredited Florida International University).

In recent years, VR has implemented a more aggressive approach in meeting the CSPD standard. VR employees will be encouraged to use the State of Florida Tuition Waiver program as much as possible, since it represents a significant savings to VR. A substantial portion of the in-service training grant was allocated solely to VR's CSPD activities. In-service training grant funds were used to pay tuition for individuals who could not get the coursework they needed through the waiver program, such as those who do not live near a public university or who otherwise cannot use the waiver program. In-service training grant funds were also allocated for textbook reimbursement. The elimination of the in-service training grant to states has severely reduced VR's ability to continue support for these activities. It is not currently clear how much of the basic support grant will be available for this kind of support. The Human Resource Development (HRD) Section has implemented a data system to track academic classes taken and progress toward certification eligibility.

In addition to the Florida public universities referenced above, VR uses the resources of Auburn University, Southern University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, the University of West Virginia, and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, all of whom provide online Masters-level rehabilitation programs. VR also uses the resources of the University of North Texas and San Diego State through the Consortium on Distance Education in Rehabilitation. VR will continue to use additional programs, as appropriate.

### **Personnel Development**

HRD efforts will continue to be oriented toward appropriate and adequate training for all employees, with available resources allocated to the CSPD effort. Although the in-service training grant was the primary funding source for these activities, it was not the only money used to fund staff development and training activities. Supplemental funds were provided from other budget resources.

Although there has been an emphasis on helping counselors meet the CSPD standard and on developing the technical, managerial, and leadership skills of supervisors and managers, VR provides staff development opportunities to employees at every level. For example, four internal lunch & learn events covering a broad range of topics from Assistive Technology, to 25 Years of the ADA, were attended by headquarters staff.

VR continues to offer individual training allocations for each staff member. This allocation can be used for job-related professional development activities, such as attending conferences, purchasing books, CDs, DVDs, or other materials, taking online short courses, or any other approved professional development activity. Supervisory approval is required for these professional development activities to ensure that employees participate in activities consistent with their individual needs and job responsibilities and requirements. The HRD Section provides consultation and technical assistance to VR employees as needed.



Florida State University offers a Certified Public Manager (CPM) program, which requires a two-year commitment. In support of leadership development, VR has developed an internal application, selection, and CPM mentoring process. VR tries to support 2-4 new candidates each year through the program, and once they obtain the CPM credential, VR works to involve staff appropriately in division-wide improvement projects. There are currently six employees from HQ and field operations enrolled in some phase of CPM.

VR purchased a learning management system (LMS) in the spring of 2013 and began implementation in May 2014. The system is named TED, for Training, Education, and Development. The system not only tracks learning participation, but also serves as a host for online learning activities for all employees. Additionally, VR purchased licenses for WebEx for training purposes. Every effort is made to ensure that the correct medium is used to address each particular issue. The ability to deliver interactive training through the LMS greatly expands the capacity of VR to provide a more extensive and comprehensive array of learning activities for all employees.

VR produces a monthly newsletter for all employees, as well as a quarterly newsletter for supervisors to share information about what is happening in the different areas, keep them up to date on new policies and procedures, and offer articles that can help them do their jobs better.

Whether offered directly or contracted by the HRD Section, VR's staff development and training programs are designed with the goal of maintaining a well-prepared, competent workforce equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully facilitate the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. VR is responsible for ensuring that employees, including contracted employees, receive necessary development and training. Accordingly, HRD includes contracted employees at all training programs.

#### **Additional Personnel Development Activities**

The Organization and Employee Support Team (OES) recently designed a new human resource information site, available through VR's SharePoint application. Using SharePoint increases the level of support and customer service provided to VR's employees, volunteers, contracted staff, supervisors, and personnel liaisons. The intent is to provide user-friendly experiences for new and existing employees. The OES Homepage provides job opportunity announcements, access to more than 900 HR forms, procedures, and policies, and a calendar of upcoming important HR dates and events.

#### **Onboarding**

Onboarding helps new personnel successfully assimilate into their new position, with a quicker ramp-up to productivity. VR wants to help all personnel be successful in their new job, get up-and-running with their new duties quickly and smoothly, and contribute to VR's success. Since VR personnel includes career service, selected exempt service/senior management service and OPS employees, as well as volunteers and contracted staff, all with differing onboarding needs, it became apparent that a one-size-fits-all approach to onboarding was not sufficient.

Based on that, OES created Onboarding resource sites specific to needs of VR's career service, selected exempt service/senior management service, and OPS employees, as well as sites specific to VR's volunteers and contracted staff. Each site provides onboarding information for the specific personnel category, such as New Hire Paperwork that provides the new employee with all of the required hiring forms and related policies, VR Mentorship Program information, TED- Training, Education, and Development links and resources, and the Human Resources Page.

**VR's Mentorship Program**

A major reason why newly hired employees struggle and ultimately leave is failure to establish connections and build strong interpersonal relationships within the organization. Understanding that new employees need connection, a sense of belonging, a sense of their potential, and a need to feel valued, OES worked with various sections within VR to create a Mentorship Program.

Mentors often play an important role in making new employees feel valued, developing coworker relationships, and helping new employees feel comfortable during the first few months of employment. Each new employee, or protégé, will be assigned to a mentor for a period of up to a year. No mentor will be assigned to more than two active protégés at any one time.

The Mentorship Program is composed of two parts. The first is a comprehensive information resource site delivered through SharePoint. The site has information specific to mentors, protégés, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and supervisors. The second component is the Individualized Mentoring Action Plan, or IMAP. The IMAP is a software application designed specifically for the mentorship program. In the IMAP, mentors and SMEs create personalized profiles. The profiles are used to assist with assigning mentors and SMEs to appropriate protégés. The software is designed to quickly sort through hundreds of mentor and SME profiles that match the needs identified in the protégé's profile.

**Human Resources Page**

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

**Needs Assessment and Evaluation**

A bi-annual training needs assessment is conducted using information from a number of sources. These include a formal needs assessment instrument, performance evaluation data, training evaluation sheets obtained from every sponsored program, exit interviews, and supervisory input. The needs assessment data determines program development and modification.

Annual performance evaluations are conducted on each employee, with intermittent evaluation, if indicated. Performance is evaluated according to standards and goals established at the beginning of the evaluation period. Employees are evaluated in the context of their knowledge, skills, and abilities within the field of rehabilitation, and on policy about priority of service to individuals with the most significant disabilities. If circumstances change, training and professional development activities are provided to help the employee meet his/her goal in support of VR's mission.

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

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



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

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

Counseling and non-counseling employees, including administrative employees, will continue to receive training in core subjects through distance and on-site learning. As caseloads and customer needs continue to grow more complex, the role of the paraprofessional technician becomes more and more critical to the effective management of caseloads. All counseling staff will continue to work toward CRC eligibility and/or degrees in rehabilitation or counseling through tuition waivers and other mechanisms.

Engineers from the Rehabilitation Technology Engineering Program, contracted through the University of South Florida, provide training on rehabilitation technology and engineering. The contract ensures that rehabilitation technology engineers are available statewide.

State labor market information, as well as national data, provides information on the employment and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities. Job announcements are published online through the People First website, providing access to all state jobs through one internet portal.

Manuals related to policy and rehabilitation information management are available online. Employees can access the internet to find information about medical and psychological conditions, rehabilitation technology, Federal/State Plan, legislation and regulations, and employment-related information.

### **Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Presenters provide orientation and training for employees serving transition students with disabilities from VR, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), and community partners. Cross-training between BEESS and VR staff is emphasized through interagency agreements as presented in Section (d) of this plan portion. The Department of Education's State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) profiles are used to gather important statistical information on graduation rates, dropout rates, Individual Educational Plan compliance, and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. Additionally, BEESS and VR continue to share and analyze student data to identify students with Individual Education Plans or 504 Plans who can benefit from VR services and any potential gaps in service.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law on July 24, 2014. The new law required VR to fund specific Pre-Employment Transition Services to youth while still in high school, including career exploration, work readiness training and work experiences. VR updated the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) and the Rehabilitation Electronic Billing Application (REBA) to collect transition data elements and track expenditures for transition youth. The Rehabilitation Services Administration will announce any additional data enhancements to meet WIOA requirements once the associated rules and regulations have been finalized.



VR strives to help LEAs meet the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. VR support includes offering an early VR referral and application process beginning at age 15, VR Transition Liaisons Contact List, VR Transition Brochures, and coordination of the Individual Education Plan with the Individualized Plan for Employment when served by both agencies. VR endorses evidence-based LEA services that benefit students with disabilities, including educating students in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers and having access to the original curricula. VR counselors continue to attend regular in-service training that specifically targets transition youth issues and helps meet the requirements of the CSPD.

VR and community partners continue to make presentations and participate in annual transition conferences at the national, state, and local level to better serve students with disabilities. These events allow for agency updates, contributing information on promising initiatives and sharing evidence-based best practices. When VR employees and local educators are assigned to teams at events, they use this time to discuss issues and learn from one another about effective transition practices. This information is often incorporated into VR staff trainings.

Statewide transition training is provided on yearly basis. New counselors also receive this training which includes resources from the VR Transition Youth Program. The *VR Transition Youth Guidelines and Best Practices* is a resource for VR transition teams to assure statewide consistency in coordinating services to students with disabilities. VR employees have access to the “*Effective Practices for Working with the School System*” and the “*Outreach for the School System*” presentations developed to improve collaboration between VR and the LEAs. At the local level, VR employees participate in interagency groups with a transition focus to improve local coordination and services to students, families, schools, employers, and agency partners.

#### **Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

VR employees need to be able to work with Florida’s diverse population. One way VR does this is to actively recruit counselors and support employees who have diverse backgrounds. VR places advertisements in ethnic newspapers and collaborates with local civic and social service groups. Bilingual individuals are on staff, but qualified interpreters or translators will continue to be used when a counselor is unable to communicate directly with a customer in his/her preferred language. VR will continue partnerships with local vendors to offer this service.

American Sign Language interpretation needs for customers who are deaf or deaf-blind are met using a combination of employee positions and arrangements with qualified local interpreter service providers. When either staff interpreters or local interpreters are not available, VR will reschedule appointments or use available text communication devices with customers. VR also has assistive listening devices available in most offices for VR employees to communicate with individuals who are hard of hearing or late-deafened and do not know sign-language.

VR complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing materials in Braille and large print, through having qualified sign language interpreters, and offering text-based communication access. In addition, VR arranges for foreign language translators when needed.



### (j) **Statewide Assessment**

During FFY 2014-15, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in partnership with the Florida Rehabilitation Council, conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) to identify factors that affect VR customers' ability to get and keep jobs, and any barriers or limitations they may experience. The CSNA consisted of the following components: state demographic profiles, a statewide public survey, stakeholder interviews, and additional information from agency performance data, customer satisfaction surveys and public input. Findings and recommendations from the CSNA will guide agency planning and development of state plans for federal fiscal years 2016 through 2018.

Table A summarizes key results from the needs assessment survey, and Table B provides CSNA findings, strategic references, and future considerations. Findings have been considered during statewide planning and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation activities. VR will continue to use this information to guide statewide and agency planning, as well as future collaborations with WIOA core programs and other stakeholders.

**Figure 9.03**  
**Key Results of Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Survey**

CSNA Survey Items	Results
Factors rated most important to job seekers with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of job matches personal abilities (83.65%)</li> <li>• Work location / available transportation (79.59%)</li> <li>• Work environment / culture (72.73%)</li> </ul>
VR services rated most important to job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training (61%)</li> <li>• Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (60%)</li> <li>• Supported Employment (52%)</li> </ul>
VR services rated most needed now by job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported Employment (34%)</li> <li>• Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (30%)</li> <li>• Training (29%)</li> </ul>
VR services rated most in-demand in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (66%)</li> <li>• Supported Employment (65%)</li> <li>• Training (64%)</li> </ul>
Groups rated as having least access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals living in rural areas (58.86%)</li> <li>• Individuals with a criminal background (48.57%)</li> <li>• Individuals on waiting list (43.95%)</li> <li>• Individuals with a mental health disability (43.57%)</li> <li>• Individuals with an intellectual disability (43.42%)</li> </ul>
Greatest barriers to employment for job seekers with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers need transportation (personal or public) (76.16%)</li> <li>• Employers underestimate the talent and skills of people with disabilities (70.67%)</li> <li>• Employers need training on working with people with disabilities (66.9%)</li> </ul>



**Figure 9.04**  
**CSNA Findings and Recommendations**

CSNA Findings	Strategic References and Future Considerations
VR needs to make a stronger case for hiring individuals with disabilities because of their skills, abilities, and qualifications.	<p>Goal 1 of VRs strategic plan focuses on ensuring customer success and satisfaction by improving business and support processes. All strategies are anticipated to increase opportunities for job seekers with disabilities, as well as increase VRs community presence and marketing. Strategies within that goal include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relations Program.</li> <li>• Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.</li> <li>• Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.</li> <li>• Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.</li> </ul>
VR needs to have greater community presence, and increase its marketing and outreach to employers and businesses.	
VR needs to better match customer skills to jobs available. This requires first knowing what jobs are available and understanding the needs of employers.	
VR needs to support better alignment between job coaches and employers.	
VR's current benchmark payment system disincentivizes working with customers who have more difficulty or require more time, finding a job.	VR has recently added a customized placement benchmark payment to its reimbursement schedule, with a higher reimbursement rate. This will be monitored for effectiveness in the future.
VR needs to explore collaborative opportunities to increase access to services and employment for people with mental health or intellectual disabilities.	VR is piloting innovative service models such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) / peer mentoring to provide more service options to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VR has expanded the use of Discovery and Customized Employment statewide, and is now focusing on increasing provider capacity to provide these services. VR continues to develop agreements and partner with other agencies and organizations to provide customers more access to community resources.

**(k) Annual Estimates****Number of Individuals in the State Who are Eligible for Services under this State Plan**

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, an estimated 2.3 million Floridians age 16 and over with a disability could be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

**Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Cost of Services with Funds Provided Under Part B of Title I and Part B of Title VI of the Act**

From July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) anticipates a workload of 37,146 individuals. Because of limited resources, VR has determined that vocational rehabilitation services cannot be provided to all individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. The following projections for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2017 are based on case management projection and budget prediction models.

The projected number of eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services by priority category, and cost of services per category are as follows:

**Figure 9.05**  
**Projected Number of Eligible Individuals to Receive VR Services**

Category	Projected Number Served	Projected Cost
Priority Category 1	23,502	\$59,050,598
Priority Category 2	13,600	\$23,891,066
Priority Category 3	44	\$294,958
Total	37,146	\$83,236,622

The estimated number of customers to be served in Supported Employment (Part B of Title VI of the Act) is 6,630.

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$83,236,622. Additionally, the cost for assessment services for SFY 2017 is projected at \$10,489,102. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for SFY 2017 is \$93,725,724. The SFY 2017 revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$99.7 million.

All expenditures associated with new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) initiatives such as 511 subminimum wage services, pre-employment transition services, and discretionary services under Order of Selection have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of waitlist categories under Order of Selection.



## **(I) State Goals and Priorities**

### **VR Vision**

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

### **VR Mission**

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

### **Three Year Strategic Goals and Priorities (FFY 2014-2016)**

During FFY 2014, VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), completed its three-year comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Information obtained from the needs assessment, management reports, and feedback from VR employees, stakeholders, and customers, is used to evaluate current goals, objectives, and projects, and establish new strategic priorities.

Following the planning process established in 2012, the Senior Leadership Team has held quarterly meetings to review progress and update strategies as needed. Annually, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, and then held a planning meeting to determine which projects to include in the updated strategic plan. The Team confirmed all changes and made revisions during a final planning meeting before presenting the updated draft strategic plan to the FRC for review and input.

### **Current Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

#### **Goal 1: Ensure Customer success and satisfaction by improving business and support processes.**

##### **Objective 1.1: Improve and align VR business processes to support WIOA implementation**

**Strategy: 1.** Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.

##### **Measure of Success:**

- Full integration and implementation of all components, including business services, field services operations and IT support systems

**Strategy: 2.** Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.

##### **Measures of Success:**

- Services re-aligned to new WIOA guidelines and implemented within required timeframes
- Budget set-aside requirements met



**Strategy: 3.** Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.

**Measure of Success:**

- Number of people diverted from or transitioned out of subminimum wage jobs

**Strategy: 4.** Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

**Measures of Success:**

- Establish baseline use of Vendor Profile
- Customer satisfaction with Vendor Profile

Objective 1.2: Redesign supports for VR service & business processes

**Strategy: 1.** Coordinate and develop the VR services portion of the statewide plan.

**Measure of Success:**

- Timely submission of all required information

**Strategy: 2.** Design and implement an approach for integration of performance and business intelligence information.

**Measures of Success:**

- Number of revised management reports implemented
- Satisfaction of affected VR Managers with revised reports

**Goal 2: Ensure Employee success and satisfaction by improving development opportunities and workplace environment.**

Objective 2.1: Provide a comprehensive workforce planning and development system

**Strategy: 1.** Implement employee onboarding and mentoring processes statewide.

**Measures of Success:**

- Percentage of new employees completing all requirements within 90 days
- Percentage of new employees assigned a mentor within 10 days from start date
- Protégé/mentor/supervisor satisfaction ratings



**Strategy: 2.** Develop an agency-wide workforce and succession management plan, including a process to capture organizational knowledge.

**Measures of Success:**

- Process accurately identifies critical positions and information
- Participant satisfaction with process / components

**Strategy: 3.** Design a program for identifying and developing VR Leadership candidates.

**Measures of Success:**

- Successful pilot/ rollout of program
- Percent of VR employees initiating participation
- Participant satisfaction with program components

**Strategy: 4.** Develop standards, guidelines and curriculum for VR employee training.

**Measures of Success:**

- Improvement in climate survey items: Q8. Opportunities to learn and grow- 83.61%
- Q11. I am satisfied with the training provided by VR- 77.19%
- Percentage of VR employees successfully completing identified training requirements

Objective 2.2: Provide a safe, accessible, and adequately equipped work environment

**Strategy: 1.** Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid info, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security / building access policy at HQ.

**Measures of Success:**

- Improvement in climate survey item: Q17. Physically safe work environment- 81.94%
- Pulse survey results following implementation of each improvement\



### (m) Order of Selection

#### **Justification for the Order of Selection**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) determined that sufficient resources were not available to provide rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities who apply. Consequently, VR established an Order of Selection (OOS) within the state to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last. This decision was based on use of funds in the preceding years, projected funding, projected number and types of referrals, number of eligible individuals, and counselor caseloads.

A historical account of VR's management of OOS categories is as follows.

- August 4, 2008 - the Order of Selection was initially implemented, closing all categories
- February 15, 2010 - VR determined that sufficient fiscal and human resources were available to serve all Priority Category 1 individuals and opened Priority Category 1
- August 2, 2010 - Priority Category 2 was opened, but Priority Category 3 remained closed
- November 15, 2013 - VR again closed Priority Category 2
- February 19, 2014 - VR again closed Priority Category 1, but received an additional \$1.4 million in nonrecurring general revenue. This state match funding allowed VR to draw down an additional \$5,172,770 of its federal grant.
- June 2014 - VR opened Priority Category 1 and began a structured release
- February 2015 - VR opened Priority Category 2

The OOS remains in effect statewide and does not select one type of disability over another. The OOS is not established based on age, sex, marital status, religion, race, color, national origin, or political affiliation, and is not based on the vocational goal of the individual with a disability. Elements that relate to the significance of disability are the only factors used in OOS.

As of September 30, 2015, 4,154 individuals remain in Priority Category 2 and 1,781 individuals remain in Priority Category 3 of the waiting list. It is anticipated that all individuals in Priority Category 2 will receive services by January 2016.



**Figure 9.06**  
**Projected Outcome and Service Goals and Time Frames for SFY 2017**

Priority Categories	Existing and New IPE to be Served	Average Annual Case Cost	Annual Cost for Purchased Client Services	Projected 26s	Projected 28s	Time/ Months
Priority 1	23,502	\$2,513	\$59,050,598	3,427	4,653	27
Priority 2	13,600	\$1,757	\$23,891,066	2,266	2,785	26
Priority 3	44	\$6,704	\$294,958	67	71	18

#### Service Costs for SFY 2017

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$83,236,622. Additionally, the cost for assessment services for SFY 2017 is projected at \$10,489,102. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for SFY 2017 is \$93,725,724. The SFY 2017 revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$99.7 million.

All expenditures associated with new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) initiatives such as 511 subminimum wage services, pre-employment transition services, and discretionary services under Order of Selection have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of waitlist categories under Order of Selection.

#### Order of Selection Policies

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

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

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

VR officially notifies all individuals of their individual OOS determination. Individuals not immediately activated for development of an employment plan are offered Information and Referral services and the option to be placed on a waiting list until employment plan development services can be initiated. Individuals on the waiting list are contacted annually to determine if additional information is available. As resources become available, those with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second, and all other eligible individuals selected last.

**Order of Selection Priority Category Description****Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 1)**

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits three or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires three or more primary services;
3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least 12 months); and
4. Requires services that are not likely to be corrected through surgical intervention and/or other treatment modes.

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

An eligible individual with a disability which:

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

**Other Eligible Individuals (Priority Category 3)**

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Limits one or more major life's activities; and/or
2. Services are expected to last less than six months.

VR is considering whether or not to provide discretionary services to eligible individuals, regardless of order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment. This is a new option created by WIOA. This has been discussed with the state rehabilitation council, but public input has not been received and a final decision has not yet been made. If VR elects to provide these services, the plan will be amended accordingly.



## (n) **Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds**

To meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) collaborates and contracts with approximately 190 private, non-profit Community Rehabilitation Programs across the state of Florida. Contracts were recently revised to allow any qualified program to provide Supported Employment services, which is anticipated to increase the capacity for these programs to provide these services.

VR has increased its focus on youth services and has expanded several options designed to help youth achieve employment outcomes. These options allow youth to gain a variety of skills and exposure to multiple career options. VR has initiated a process to allow youth to begin receiving services at 15 years old.

VR participates as a partner in:

- High School High Tech programs in Florida's schools
- Third Party Cooperative agreements with local school districts
- Project Search
- On-the-Job Training Opportunities

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) presents VR with the opportunity to provide Extended Services to youth for up to four years, as necessary, and funds permit. VR is now authorized to provide supported employment services up to 24 months if necessary.

### **Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive Supported Employment services.**

#### Plans

- VR will continue to provide supported employment services on a statewide basis through Title VI, Part B funds and Title I funds. Statewide allocation of funds allows for equal delivery of services throughout Florida. Individuals may receive supported employment services using a combination of Title I and/or Title VI, Part B funds, and revenues generated from Social Security reimbursements, community rehabilitation partners, or other state program revenues.
- Fully expend Title VI, Part B funds for the purchase of supported employment services after reserving no more than five percent for program administration.
- Provide a variety of training and awareness programs designed to increase the awareness of supported employment as a vocational service for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies.

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



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

Plans

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with Title VI, Part B funds, to provide supported employment services as specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Purchase supported employment services based upon established performance benchmarks. The contract for supported employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes for individuals served.
- Funds may also be used for related customized employment strategies of Discovery and supported self-employment services.

**Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation service staff, families, and individuals.**

Plans

- Increase supported employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families, and individuals.
- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share, and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Participate as an advisory member on a variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors, and other agency employees.

**Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services.**Plans

- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the extended service resources they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports.
- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports as a resource for ongoing supports.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.
- Use the Business Relations Team to provide training and technical assistance to employers interested in working with VR customers. They will also develop positive relationships with employers to increase employment opportunities.
- Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk as a resource to link employers to qualified jobseekers with disabilities. VR is a partner in the development of and administers the AbilitiesWork Help Desk, a collaboration between the state's Workforce system, Division of Blind Services, and APD.

**(o) State's Strategies****Council Support**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continues to provide support for the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC). VR allocates funds for the operation of FRC to achieve the goals and objectives in their strategic plan. FRC participates as an active strategic partner with VR in carrying out the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. VR and FILC operate under a three-year contract, which aligns with the three-year State Plan for Independent Living.

**Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds**

VR currently has one innovation and expansion project, described below. VR will consider procurement of new innovation and expansion contracts during FFY 2016, complimentary to the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementations.

1. **University of South Florida, Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology** – Use virtual reality, simulators, robotics, and feedback interfaces to allow the vocational rehabilitation population to try various jobs, tasks, virtual environments, and assistive technologies prior to entering the actual employment setting.

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

**Rehabilitation Technology**

Rehabilitation Technology is provided through a contractual agreement with the Center for Engineering and Technology Program at the University of South Florida. The program provides rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for VR customers across all stages of the rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices that supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services like job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment.

**Assistive Technology Services and Devices**

VR sponsors the Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Project that is directed by the Assistive Technology Advisory Council in accordance with Section 413.407, Florida Statutes. The project provides for the coordination and delivery of appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. (FAAST), is a not-for-profit corporation for which the Assistive Technology Advisory Council acts as the board of directors, manages the project, and provides administrative and technical support to the council.

FAAST is responsible for administering a low interest loan authority that provides funding to individuals with disabilities who may be unable to qualify for traditional loans and bank financing to purchase assistive technology devices.

Assistive technology includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation.

**Expansion and Improvement of Services**

Results gained through the continued Innovation and Expansion contract will contribute to improved employment opportunities for VR customers. In addition to the innovation and expansion project, VR's SFY 2014-16 Strategic Plan includes a number of strategies that are anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relations Program.
- 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

**Outreach to Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities and/or who have been Unserved or Underserved**

VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations. Strategic projects and local-level outreach activities include the following:

- 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with community/faith-based organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.
- Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by VR area offices for underrepresented populations. Conduct outreach in local communities to promote VR as an agency, and help individuals with disabilities who are minorities or who may be unserved or underserved to return or remain in the workplace.
- Continue to conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.
- Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe.

**Improving and Expanding VR Services for Students with Disabilities**

WIOA provides great opportunities for VR to increase transition services and opportunities to youth with disabilities. Increased information and referral to transition age youth is built into WIOA, and VR has already begun providing more transition service-related information to youth. Strategies noted below are anticipated to increase opportunities for students with disabilities.

- Continue to offer Third-Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) to all school districts annually. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA partnerships to all school districts in Florida, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR has recently hired another transition administrator to ensure that information is provided consistently to all school districts, and to coordinate and monitor active and potential TPCA partnerships.
- Two peer mentoring initiatives are planned at this time. A peer mentoring/IPS project with a youth element is being developed in Broward County, and a youth-specific peer mentoring project is being developed in partnership with Florida Atlantic University.
- Additional initiatives are under way to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth. These include approval of CareerSource Florida to provide pre-placement services, revision of Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTAC) recertification procedures, and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR is also partnering with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, Florida ARC, and High School High Tech to offer more OJT and community work experiences.



### **Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs**

VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements. Results of the FFY 2014 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment did not indicate a need to establish or develop community rehabilitation programs, although it was indicated that employment providers have a need to better promote and raise awareness of their services. Strategies to improve business relationships with community rehabilitation programs include:

- 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

### **Strategies to Improve the Performance Related to Goals, Priorities, and Performance Indicators**

**Figure 9.07**  
**Federal Standards and Indicators**

<b>Federal Performance Indicators and Targets</b>	<b>Actual Performance (FFY 15)</b>	<b>Previous Year (FFY 14)</b>
<b>Indicator 1.1:</b> Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	-2,177	+437
<b>Indicator 1.2:</b> Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	37.4%	29.82%
<b>Indicator 1.3:</b> Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	99%	99.67%
<b>Indicator 1.4:</b> Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	99.1%	97.53%
<b>Indicator 1.5:</b> Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	54%	51.67%
<b>Indicator 1.6:</b> Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	65.3%	66.2%
<b>Indicator 2.1:</b> Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	98%	98%



VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to identify and close inactive cases, after diligent efforts to locate and/or reengage customers. Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR is beginning to see the anticipated shift in the ratio of successful closures to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased number and percentage of employment outcomes, as previously measured by Federal Performance Indicators 1.1 and 1.2.

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

- 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support, and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA.

### **Strategies for the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities**

WIOA presents requirements and opportunities for VR to strengthen its partnership with entities of the Statewide Workforce Development System. In addition to requirements outlined in WIOA, the following strategies will increase partnerships with the statewide workforce development system to further help jobseekers with disabilities.

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

**Equitable Access**

Since 2013, VR has made great progress in accommodation and access to services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specific accomplishments include completion of revised best practices guides for services and communication, as well as hiring a specialized consultant in the field of deaf-blindness to develop best practices, provide consultation, training, and advocacy with stakeholders involved in these cases.

VR also repurposed a vacated FTE into a Deaf-Blind Interpreter position, which was filled during FFY 2014. Key administrators from VR and FDBS held monthly meetings to revise and update the Memorandum of Agreement, develop strategies, discuss training needs, create informational guides needed by both agencies for this population, and provide case consultation. Additional VR strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows:

- 2.2.1. Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid information, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security/building access policy at HQ.
- Continue to use interpreters and translators and VR's online resources as well as the websites of other partners and stakeholders (where permitted) to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
- Offer reasonable accommodations to give equal access to services, and make sure materials and other program information are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics, and other settings.
- Continue to assign counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing, transition students, mental health customers, and brain and spinal cord injury customers.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other One-stop system partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with the intent to include universal design as a separate component of the One-stop career center certification process.



## (p) **Evaluation and Reports of Progress**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), established three strategic goals for FFY 2015. These goals and priorities were developed based on an analysis of VR's performance on the federal standards and indicators, the preliminary result of the statewide needs assessment, and input from customers, providers, and other stakeholders.

The following section provides VR's evaluation and report of progress towards achieving its strategic goals.

### **Review of VR Program Goals for FFY 2015**

#### **Goal 1: Improve Customer Success and Satisfaction**

##### Objective 1.1: Improve the assessment of customer satisfaction

**Strategy:** 1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.

**Performance Measure:** Ensure successful execution of the new contract and monitor for contractual compliance.

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

In addition to data collected through the customer satisfaction survey, VR uses data collected by the Ombudsman Unit to analyze customer success and satisfaction. Below is a comparative summary of customer inquiry and mediation requests fielded by the Ombudsman Unit during FFYs 2014-15 and 2013-14.



**Figure 9.08**  
**Requests by Type and Federal Fiscal Year**

Request Type	FFY 2013-14	FFY 2014-15
Information & Referral	773	728
Clarification of VR Process	278	310
Complaints	1,272	1,299
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,323</b>	<b>2,337</b>

**Complaints by Type and Federal Fiscal Year**

Complaint Type	FFY 2013-14	FFY 2014-15
Applicant/Eligibility	31	27
Nature and Content of IPE	117	111
Quality of VR Counseling Services	427	344
Delivery/Quality of Other Services	243	259
Cost of Services	11	8
Termination of Services/Closure	103	108
All Other Complaints	340	442
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>1,299</b>

**Mediations by Type and Federal Fiscal Year**

Mediation Type	FFY 2013-14	FFY 2014-15
Resolved in area through Administrative Review or informal mediation	38	24
Mediations (Formal)	0	0
Referred to Fair Hearing	18	26
Pending	4	4
Request denied (Untimely)	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>56</b>



Objective 1.2: Improve vendor and contracted services processes

**Strategy:** 1. Develop background screening process for specific providers.

**Performance Measure:** Implement background screening program.

**Actual Performance:** The Agency for Healthcare Administration Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse is now operational. Providers subject to background screening requirements are now being processed through the system. Continue operationally.

**Strategy:** 2. Review and revise vendor management process.

**Performance Measure:** A plan and routine progress reports will be submitted to VR Senior Management Team for review.

**Actual Performance:** The registration process for Employment Services providers has been revised to require qualifications review and approval at the time of application. The Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse is now in use. The next steps operationally are to re-evaluate current experiential requirements for employment specialists, review the Qualifications Manual and all current applications for areas of improvement, and continue to evaluate/monitor current processes for areas of improvement.

**Strategy:** 3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.

**Performance Measure:** Finalize risk assessment of all contracts and establish a baseline of current performance. Develop standardized tools for routine monitoring and train appropriate employees on their use. Develop schedule of routine contract monitoring.

**Actual Performance:** Monitoring tools have been developed and all appropriate staff have been trained on their use. A risk assessment of all current employment services contracts has been completed. Thirty-four (34) providers determined to be either high or medium risk are currently being monitored. Continue operationally.

**Strategy:** 4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.

**Performance Measure:** Specific outreach activities to find new vendors. Recommendation to add referral identification question(s) to document to track referral source.

**Actual Performance:** This strategy will continue operationally as needed. Vendor outreach efforts include a vendor newsletter, updates to vendor pages on Rehabworks.org, and targeted social media posts for specific vendor types.

**Strategy:** 5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.

**Performance Measure:** Increase in number of employment and supported employment vendors available where needed.

**Actual Performance:** Strategy was removed, but work continues operationally.

Objective 1.3: Increase employment opportunities for VR customers

**Strategy:** 1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.

**Performance Measure:** Review and revise FL Job Connections website and connect it to the national Talent Acquisition Portal and the FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity disability web portal.

**Actual Performance:** Website has been revised and is now the AbilitiesWork Help desk portal. This will continue as an operational VR process.

**Strategy:** 2. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

**Performance Measure:** Baseline use of vendor profile and measure increase in use.

**Actual Performance:** This strategy is still active. Much work has been done to design the layout and information that will be provided in the vendor profile. Wireframes have been developed, and programming is on hold through the IT Governance process.

**Strategy:** 3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.

**Performance Measure:** Revise TPCA requirements, offer to all school districts, and implement new contracts.

**Actual Performance:** TPCA requirements were revised and the new contract was offered to all school districts. New contracts are being implemented. This strategy will continue operationally, as these contracts are updated and re-offered annually.

**Goal 2: Improve Employee Development and Workplace Environment**Objective 2.1: Improve the system for developing VR employees

**Strategy:** 1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, succession planning, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of an LMS.

**Performance Measure:** Improvement in climate survey items Q8 (Opportunities to learn and grow) and Q11 (Satisfaction with training provided by VR)

**Actual Performance:** This strategy was revised and is still active on the current strategic plan. TED, the VR learning management system, has been successfully implemented statewide and provides an efficient and far-reaching method to provide training and information to all VR staff. Revisions to the mentoring program are in the final stages of completion, with rollout of the new program anticipated for spring 2016. Revisions to the Onboarding program are complete and implemented. Additional information about TED and VR's Onboarding and Mentoring Program initiatives is included in Section (i) of this plan.



Objective 2.2: Provide a safe, accessible, and adequately equipped work environment

**Strategy:** 1. Develop a process to report defective/unsafe working conditions, and provide safety and facilities management training to area employees.

**Performance Measure:** Improvement in Climate survey item Q17 (Physically safe work environment)

**Actual Performance:** Much progress has been made toward ensuring staff and customer safety. All VR offices were queried and upgrades were made to furniture and equipment. This strategy was combined with the strategy below and is still active on the current strategic plan. New policies have been developed for building security and access, facility keys, and chair inspections. First aid kits and automated external defibrillator devices have been installed at VR offices, and safety training has been provided to appropriate personnel.

**Strategy:** 2. Strengthen facilities processes and provide appropriate field staff additional supports.

**Performance Measure:** Resources include creating a move manual, statewide safety manual, statewide first aid information, safety furniture inspection instructions.

**Actual Performance:** This strategy was combined with the above strategy and is still active on the current strategic plan. Progress continues towards ensuring personnel and customer safety. The VR headquarters office moved during this timeframe, and before the move, building modifications were successfully completed that improved accessibility for all tenants in the building. The facilities team has developed a standard leasing process and a move manual to aid those responsible for these tasks.

**Strategy:** 3. Improve the accessibility of VR facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive evaluation with VR customer participation.

**Performance Measure:** Improvement in climate survey item Q4 (Accessible work environment); percent of ADA- compliant work units.

**Actual Performance:** FDOE leasing staff conducts ADA inspections of all new or renewed VR office leases. VR customers are included in this process when possible. Six VR employees have completed ADA Coordinator training. Continue operationally.

**Goal 3: Improve VR Support Processes**

Objective 3.1: Improve information technology applications

**Strategy:** 1. Use SharePoint to improve information sharing, collaboration and team projects.

**Performance Measure:** Increase in team sites

**Actual Performance:** Team sites continue to be requested and developed. This is now an operational, ongoing task.



**Strategy:** 2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.

**Performance Measure:** Percent of RIMS modules completed

**Actual Performance:** This strategy was removed, as it is an operational business process. Improvements are still in progress on RIMS modules that require WIOA changes, and will continue operationally to incorporate all WIOA changes.

#### Objective 3.2: Improve VR business intelligence

**Strategy:** 1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.

**Performance Measure:** Number of management reports revised and implemented.

**Actual Performance:** Data management functions have been streamlined, starting with creating a team to fulfill data generation, analysis, and reporting. The team has further standardized the collection, planning, and delivery of data requests by creating templates for each task, and has improved data communication methods through the use of dedicated email and intranet locations. Progress continues on data validation and reporting improvements.

#### **Explanation of Performance:**

##### Strategies that contributed to achievement of goals and priorities

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

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



#### Barriers that impeded achievement of goals and priorities

Despite obstacles such as changes to waitlist management, fiscal strains, preparing for and implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), staff turnover and rising caseload sizes, VR made great progress towards achieving its strategic projects and agency priorities. When waitlist categories were closed due to fiscal and human resource deficits, field staff used this time to reconnect and engage customers, as well as close cases for customers no longer interested in services. Budget and caseload projection models were also developed during this time, and have allowed VR to better manage and plan.

Preparing for WIOA implementation forced VR to reexamine its business processes and organizational structure, which has resulted in more efficient and standardized operations. It has also allowed VR to develop true partnerships and connections with other employment-focused entities. These improvements, borne out of necessity, have increased VR's ability to plan for the future, as well as to be flexible when barriers are encountered.

**Figure 9.07**  
**Federal Standards and Indicators**

<b>Federal Performance Indicators and Targets</b>	<b>Actual Performance (FFY 15)</b>	<b>Previous Year (FFY 14)</b>
Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	-2,177	+437
Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	37.4%	29.82%
Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	99%	99.67%
Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	99.1%	97.53%
Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	54%	51.67%
Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	65.3%	66.2%
Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	98%	98%

#### Explanation of Performance:

VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to identify and close inactive cases, after diligent efforts to locate and/or reengage customers. Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR is beginning to see the anticipated shift in the ratio of successful to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased number and percentage of employment outcomes, previously measured by Federal Performance Indicators 1.1 and 1.2.

**Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

In FFY 2013-14, with the agreement of the FRC, VR continued to use funds designated under this section to support the functions of the FRC and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC), and to support opportunities for improving the efficiency of service delivery.

**Actual Performance:**

VR continues to support and collaborate with the FRC and FILC as required in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In FFY 2014, a total of 16,699 independent living plans were developed, and 28,244 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living.

In FFY 2011, VR completed a competitive procurement and awarded four contracts to providers for Innovation and Expansion projects. The innovative services included virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities, vocational services and assistance for transitioning youth with most significant disabilities, and assistance and support for individuals with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury or significant mental illnesses. Of the initial contracts awarded, one for virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities is still current. The provider is the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology at the University of South Florida. VR anticipates that these services will continue to contribute to greater employment opportunities for customers.

**Explanation of Performance:**

These collaborative efforts helped strengthen leadership and improve services, which led to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that the continuing Innovation and Expansion project will contribute positively to VR's rehabilitation rate and provide more informed customer choice and options.

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

**Evaluation of Supported Employment Program****Review of Attachment 4.11 (c) (4)****Goal 1: Increase service capacity for individuals with the most significant disabilities****Actual Performance:**

VR allocated Title VI, Part B funds among its six areas on the same basis as Title I funds to ensure individuals with most significant disabilities have equal access statewide to VR services. VR spent its Title VI, Part B funds early in the fiscal year but continued to provide supported employment services as needed using Title I funds.

VR increased training opportunities for counselors, providers and other stakeholders with a focus on innovative ways to increase employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities. VR has made it a priority to increase the existing provider base so more individuals can be served in a timely manner. VR has also worked with existing providers to expand their services.

VR is a partner in the Employment First Initiative in Florida, created by Executive Order Number 13-284 issued by Governor Rick Scott. A Strategic Action Plan and agreement was developed with all of the mandated agencies and organizations. The plan included ways the agencies could work together to promote competitive integrated employment as the first and primary employment option. The Interagency agreement was approved and implementation has begun on the objectives listed below.

- Establish a commitment among the agencies' leadership to maximize resources and coordinate with each other to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities seeking publically funded services.
- Develop strategic goals and reasonable benchmarks to assist the agencies in implementing this agreement.
- Identify financing and contracting methods that will prioritize employment among the array of services paid for or provided by agencies.
- Identify ways training opportunities can be better utilized by agency employees and contracted providers to ensure effectiveness of employment services.
- Ensure collaboration occurs during the development of service plans, including the Individualized Plan for Employment, when individuals are served by multiple agencies to achieve their employment goals.
- Promote service innovation.
- Identify accountability measures to ensure sustainability.

In addition, VR added Discovery as a service option and provided training options to providers and staff to increase the use of Discovery. Last year approximately, 30 providers added Discovery as one of their services. Training is ongoing and available for providers. This helped increase the number of individuals who are now seamlessly moving into Supported Employment. It is also expanding VR Counselor's view of who is employable.

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

VR provided supported employment services to individuals with most significant disabilities who benefitted from these services. Data below represents VR's performance in serving supported employment customers.

## FFY 2015 Supported Employment Performance Data

- Number of active cases: 5,127
- Number of Individualized Plans for Employment: 2,555
- Number of Employment Outcomes: 697

**Goal 3: Use the five percent permitted for administration to fund development and delivery of training and technical assistance**Actual Performance:

1. The supported employment administrator continues to provide training on service delivery for individuals with the most significant disabilities to new counselors, as well as follow-up trainings and technical assistance to seasoned counselors and supervisors at conferences, meetings, workshops, and upon request.
2. VR administrators provided training to families and members in the community as requested. These sessions are designed to provide information and a vision that supported employment services are designed for individuals with the most significant disabilities. They provide families and customers with the information they need to become successfully employed. The sessions were provided to the groups and organizations listed below. Additional presentations are made throughout the year to local stakeholder groups.
  - Florida Developmental Disability Council
  - Family Care Council
  - Waiver Support Coordinators
  - Florida Rehabilitation Council
  - Florida Project Search
  - Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultant Area Trainings
  - Transition Committees
  - Individualized Trainings
  - Family Disability Network
  - Florida Department of Education Employees
  - Family Café
  - Visions
  - AmeriCorps
  - Florida ARC



3. VR administrators provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR staff, and individual customers.
4. A number of strategies were used to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities listed below.
  - a. Representation on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Employment Task Force. This included helping develop pilot projects on a wide array of employment topics. Administrators were involved as task force members, on advisory committees, and as monitors of projects. The projects complimented and supported VR's mission of helping individuals get or keep a job.
  - b. Presentations on supported employment at conferences around the state. Audiences included professionals, families, and students regarding employment options.
  - c. Participation as a board member for the Florida Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE).
  - d. Representation on the Statewide Employment First Initiative by VR's supported employment and transition administrators. This included helping develop the Cooperative Agreement and the Collaborative Strategic Action Implementation Plan supporting employment as mandated by the Governor's Executive Order Number 13-284.
  - e. The VR Administrator coordinated and developed training for providers and staff on Discovery Services.

#### **Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services**

##### Actual Performance:

1. VR has expanded its services to include Discovery to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. Discovery improves the quality of the placements, increases the success of the job placements, and reduces the need for intense follow up supports. This service is now available on a limited basis in all VR Areas. Concentrated efforts are in place to continue to increase capacity across the state.
2. VR employees continue to serve as resource members on Business Leadership Networks to educate businesses and employers about on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment.
3. VR and APD administrators work together to provide training for VR counselors, waiver support coordinators, and for APD field staff on best practices in supported employment and the roles and responsibilities of all partners. Training included a focus on all of the possible extended service options.



4. VR employees participate as requested in APD hosted conference calls, as well as quarterly meetings designed to make the supported employment service delivery system for mutual customers an effective and efficient one.
5. The supported employment administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services. Of particular focus has been the development of natural and employer supports available on the jobsite.

Explanation of Performance:

The strategies reported above helped VR continue progress in providing successful services and employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

**Review of Attachment 6.3**

Actual Performance:

1. VR, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, increased contracts from 17-20 school districts to help provide community-based work experiences to students with disabilities.
2. VR administrators presented at the Family Care Council, Family Café, Employment, Business Leadership Network, Florida Developmental Disability Council, VISIONS and other conferences in an effort to increase awareness about using natural supports and emphasized its use as a realistic option for successful job maintenance.
3. The VR supported employment administrator partners with APD to provide joint skills-development training on supported employment to counselors and waiver support coordinators, and provides technical assistance, as needed. VR and APD have worked together to provide information about the funds available from the Employment Enhancement Funds that APD has received for individuals on their waiting list interested in employment-related services.
4. The VR supported employment administrator provides training to certified business and technical assistance consultants and VR employees to encourage the use of supported self-employment as an employment option for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
5. VR works closely with the Employment First Partnership and Coalition, which includes nine organizations and agencies with related employment services. Promoting employment of people with disabilities was initial focus of the group.

Explanation of Performance:

The strategies reported above helped VR improve services and increase employment options for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

**Barriers:**

VR's desire to provide supported employment services was complicated by the lack of sufficient partner resources for commitment of long-term supports. As budgets are reduced at state and local levels, creative resource sharing and options are being explored with stakeholders.

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

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

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

**(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services****Quality**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is committed to providing quality supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR supports the individual in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. The scope of services varies based on the amount, intensity, and support needed by each individual.

The quality of supported employment outcomes is assessed individually. Each individual receives services that are individually determined based on the needs of the individual. A key component of evaluating the service is the individual satisfaction with the services and supports, as well as the successful employment outcome. VR makes every effort to provide opportunities for individuals to share their feedback on the services they received from VR. This feedback is useful information in adjusting and improving VR services. There are informal attempts to determine satisfaction as well as formal surveys, public hearings and satisfaction surveys. The VR counselor has regular communications with the individual and the supported employment provider to monitor, provide counseling, and assist the individual, as needed.

VR also recognizes that to determine the quality of the services, it is important to get feedback from the employer's perspective, as well as the provider. Their input is solicited as well, and they are encouraged to let VR know at any point if they are having issues and need some support.

VR counselors work in partnership with the individual when developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This plan guides the services and supports that are needed for that individual. The IPE is evaluated throughout the process and updated as needed.

**Scope**

The scope of supported employment services varies based on the amount, intensity, and type of support each person may need to obtain and maintain a job. Phase 1 of supported employment services includes intense services needed to help an individual with a most significant disability obtain and maintain a job of his/her choice.

Supported employment makes possible competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities and for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and because of the severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to maintain their job.

Service limits have been increased from 18 months to 24 months per WIOA regulations. Under special circumstances, the customer and VR counselor may jointly agree in writing to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Services are individually designed around the needs and desires of the individual and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Initial placement and stabilization in the workplace
- Job Coaching
- Assistive Technology
- Specialized Job Training
- Social Skill Training
- Discovery
- Formal and informal worksite-related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication)
- Supported Self-Employment
- Customized Job Placement

VR has added Discovery as a service option to its array of supported employment services. It offers a more intensive person-centered planning approach for those individuals with the most significant and complex disabilities who may need a more customized approach to employment.

VR is in the process of adding a customized job placement option for individuals in supported employment who may need a more individualized job development process. Individuals in supported employment services will have access to this service as appropriate.

Post-employment services may also be provided when supports and services are needed which exceed the responsibility of the extended ongoing support service provider.

**Extent**

VR will continue to expand supported employment services by educating community members, providers, and relevant stakeholders on the need and advantages that supported employment provides for individuals and employers.

Supported employment services are available for individuals with most significant needs who meet the criteria for VR services and supports.

VR has increased its focus on youth and has increased several initiatives designed for youth with most significant disabilities. The following experiences are anticipated to help youth in their desire to have a successful career.

- High School High Tech
- Project Search
- Post-Secondary Education programs
- Third Party Cooperative Agreements

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. These evidence-based applications of learning, which include internships and On-the-Job Training (OJT), often lead to successful employment.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) also provides the opportunity for youth to receive up to four years of extended services funded through VR, if necessary, and with the availability of funding. This is the only situation that VR is permitted to provide extended services.

VR will:

- Develop a new cooperative agreement with APD specific to supported employment and removing barriers for employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Implement the Interagency Employment First Agreement between the eight signatory parties. Continue to implement the agreements at the local level with appropriate stakeholders.
- Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring an efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, and coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services available for youth and adults.
- Implement an interagency planning process between VR and APD that defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
- Expand available services through youth-related initiatives.
- Seek additional resources for Phase 2 services through collaborations with agency partners, including APD, Agency for Healthcare Administration, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Department of Education, and other stakeholders
- Collaborate with community organizations, employers, families, and support groups to develop natural supports for supported employment extended services.



- Distribute information and train counselors about Social Security Work Incentives. Increase awareness of using a Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency or other work incentives as an option for funding extended services. Include training on the new Able Act as a potential way for individuals to fund their own services.
- Provide training on how to use natural supports, including self-pay, family/friends, and employers.
- Provide opportunities for counselors, providers, and support coordinators to receive training on innovative employment strategies designed to promote employment success for individuals.

**Extended Services /PHASE 2**

VR's approach for supported employment uses the nationally accepted "best practices" models of supported employment services and has added new customized strategies as well. The key to the approach is an emphasis on person-centered planning and facilitation of natural supports. Individualized job development is conducted and based on job-matching assessment information, informed choice, strengths, interests, skills. Individuals are assisted with employment planning and placement by selected providers, and job skills training is provided at the job site either by job coaches or through natural supports of existing resources.

Transition to Extended Services occurs after a minimum of 90 days of stabilized employment. At the time of transition, the counselor, providers, individual, and others, as applicable, will have agreed that the individual is stable in their employment and expected to succeed. VR counselors confirm this information with the individual, provider, and individual. They will continue to monitor the case until the person reaches a successful employment outcome.

VR continues to:

- Emphasize providing services to all racial/ethnic minorities
- Seek additional resources for Phase 2 services in collaboration with VR partners
- Collaborate with community organizations, families, and support groups to develop natural supports as an option for assisting customers on the job site
- Participate on interagency committees to expand initiatives and increase employment outcomes
- Distribute and provide technical assistance to counselors on the use of Social Security Work Incentives to help with funding Phase 2 services.

Extended services are provided and/or funded by sources other than VR. VR works collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to ensure that extended ongoing support services, identified on the individualized plan as needed for employment, are available for as long as the customer needs them.

VR has a statewide coordinator who monitors supported employment-related issues that develop in the field and serves as a resource person to field staff. The coordinator also serves as an advisor to administrative employees in implementing programmatic policies in accordance with federal dictates, developing effective programmatic procedures, recommending training for supported employment staff, and other typical functions of a coordinating and liaison nature.



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

#### CERTIFICATIONS

##### States must provide written and signed certifications that:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | The Florida Department of Education is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, <sup>1</sup> and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act <sup>2</sup> ;  |
| 2. | As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Florida Department of Education <sup>3</sup> agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>4</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations <sup>5</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;                         |
| 3. | As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>6</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations <sup>7</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; |
| 4. | The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;   |

<sup>1</sup> Public Law 113-128.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.<sup>3</sup> All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

<sup>3</sup> All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>5</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

<sup>6</sup> No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>7</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.



5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The Commissioner of Education has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The Commissioner of Education has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

#### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DATE: 12/7/15

Commissioner Pam Stewart

#### 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 of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), 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 provide assurances that:	
1.	<b>Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:</b> 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.	<b>Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:</b> 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 plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3.	<p><b>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:</b> The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(b) the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> (A) is an independent State commission.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>(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. the non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60.</li> <li>(d) 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. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No)</li> <li>(e) the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No)</li> <li>(f) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input type="checkbox"/> No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.</li> <li>(g) the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(h) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(i) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(j) 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</li> </ul>



	<p>the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(k) 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.</p> <p>(l) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
4.	<p><b>Administration of the Provision of VR Services:</b> The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <p>(a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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 .</p> <p>(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 in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No)</p> <p>(d) comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and.</p> <p>(e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act .</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, 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, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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</p>
5.	<p><b>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:</b></p> <p>(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</p>



	<p>Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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.</p>
6.	<p>(a) <b>Financial Administration:</b> 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)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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.</p>
7.	<p>(a) <b>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</b> The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>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)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> </ol>



## CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

### CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Applicants must review the requirements for certification regarding lobbying included in the regulations cited below before completing this form. Applicants must sign this form to comply with the certification requirements under 34 CFR Part 82, "New Restrictions on Lobbying." This certification is a material representation of fact upon which the Department of Education relies when it makes a grant or enters into a cooperative agreement.

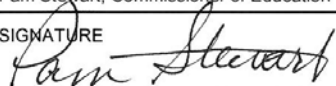
As required by Section 1352, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 82, for persons entering into a Federal contract, grant or cooperative agreement over \$100,000, as defined at 34 CFR Part 82, Sections 82.105 and 82.110, the applicant certifies that:

(a) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal grant or cooperative agreement;

(b) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal grant or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form - LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions;

(c) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subgrants and contracts under grants and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certification.

NAME OF APPLICANT	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Basic-VR: H126A160086
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education	
SIGNATURE	DATE
	12/7/15

ED 80-0013

06/04



## **X. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS– FLORIDA DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES**

---

### **(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

The Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) continued its collaboration and working partnership with the Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) and played an active role in marketing FDBS.

- Governor Rick Scott announced three appointments and two reappointments January 22, 2015. These terms will expire August 31, 2017.
- Election of officers occurred during both the February 2014 and February 2015 quarterly meetings.
- The FRCB attended the Vision Summit on February 13, 2015 held on the 22nd Floor of the Florida Capitol.
- The FRCB and FDBS presented plaques of appreciation for employing individuals with visual disabilities to the following employers:
  - Walgreen's Distribution Center, West Palm Beach in October 2014
  - The Center for the Visually Impaired October 2014;
  - Children's Medical Services, Tallahassee in February 2015
  - Interim Health Care February 2015
  - Tomlinson Adult Learning Center, St. Petersburg in April 2015
  - MammaCare Corporation, Gainesville in July 2015

The council continues its practice of scheduling four quarterly meetings around the state. A public forum was conducted during three of the meetings. Agenda items included:

- Tour of the Florida Rehabilitation Center and new technology training center in Daytona Beach
- Election of new officers–February, 2014
- District Administrator's Report
- Employer Recognition
- Local Community Rehabilitation Program Reports
  - Lighthouse of the Big Bend
  - Lighthouse of Pinellas
  - Florida Center for the Blind
  - Lighthouse of Palm Beaches
  - Florida Outreach Center
- Client Satisfaction Survey Data Updates
  - February 2015 and April 2015
- FDBS State Plan Updates
- Vocational Rehabilitation Goals Updates



- Needs Assessment Update
- New Committee Appointments
- Deaf Blind Specialist Update
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014
- Updates on Outreach to Underserved/Unserved
- Strategic Plan Discussions

The council requested FDBS to include updates and training at each meeting. Items presented by FDBS included:

- Director's report (each meeting);
- Report from the local district administrator (each meeting);
- Update on the Blind Services Foundation;
- FDBS budget report and legislative updates;
- Discussion of the state plan for council input;
- Extensive discussion of the needs assessment;
- Discussion of the strategic plan; and
- Update on outreach to underserved/unserved.

The council reviewed and provided input on the following FDBS policies:

- #6.07 Rehab Assistive Technology
- #2.10 Self-Employment

FRCB and the Florida Rehabilitation Council collaborate by having cross-representation attend and participate at each council meeting. This representation is included in the bylaws as follows: The council will designate two members (a primary and alternate) as representatives to serve on the Florida Rehabilitation Council in an ex-officio capacity. The primary representative will serve a 2-year term. The alternate will become the primary representative and a new alternate will be appointed.

The council will recognize a representative from the Florida Rehabilitation Council to serve in an ex-officio capacity. Said representative will serve a two year term.

The FRCB continues to contract with the Florida State University Survey Research Laboratory, to conduct the client satisfaction survey.

### **Council Recommendations**

To ensure the council has an opportunity to review and provide input on the state plan, the council recommended that a draft of the state plan be provided to the council in the month of February 2015.

***FDBS Response***

Submitting a draft of the State Plan by February 2015 was not feasible due to the Unified State Plan requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. FDBS informed the council that state plan information would be provided for input and review prior to any submission.

Additionally, the council recommended that the division consider incorporating the following items:

- 1) Consider the addition of a sentence in the state plan section (i), which relates to the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) to read that “Each employee in this program must terminate on a specific date which enables us to predict when vacancies will occur”;

FDBS Response: The division agrees with the council and has incorporated such language. This language can be found in section (i).

- 2) Identify issues that significantly alter the performance of unsuccessful closures;

FDBS Response: Although the division has exceeded its successful closure goals for SFY 2015, results from the 2014 Needs Assessment identified barriers that lead to unsuccessful employment. Some of the barriers include lack of jobs, lack of transportation to job site, difficulty with travel skills, lack of accommodations, lack of consumer motivation, lack of consumer experience, poor health, and lack of needed vocational rehabilitation.

- 3) Re-evaluate the training expected by placement specialists;

FDBS Response: The Bureau of Client Services continues to assess its existing placement specialist training curriculum and explore other placement training models to ensure successful outcomes.

- 4) Include reiteration that the actual IPE will be made available in an appropriate format;

FDBS Response: The Bureau of Client Services will ensure that its internal documents are made available in accessible format. This is noted in section (I), strategy 2.1.

- 5) Include some specific commitment to make changes based on the findings of the needs assessment;

FDBS Response: The division concurs with the council and has developed strategies to address findings identified in the Needs Assessment. See section (I) for strategies.

- 6) Identify issues with interpreter services for the underserved growing Asian/Hawaiian population.

FDBS Response: The division will analyze and provide available data at a later date.



## (b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

### Overview

FDBS provides services throughout the state, including transition services that increase and improve vocational rehabilitation options for eligible customers. While FDBS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES). Under this Memorandum of Understanding and partnerships with community rehabilitation providers across the state, the division is able to provide quality services to our clients. At this time, FDBS is not requesting a Waiver of Statewideness for this State Plan.

### *Types of Services Provided*

This is a state-level interagency agreement charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school who are progressing to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. These agencies agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives; collaborate on training and special projects; cooperate in planning and budgeting; and generally support any areas of work which are mutually beneficial.

In general, the purpose of this agreement is to encourage and facilitate cooperation and collaboration among the local leadership and staff of the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and local offices of VR, FDBS, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health throughout Florida, within the context of applicable federal and state regulations required of each agency, namely:

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

**Written Assurances**

FDBS assures the Rehabilitation Services Administration that it has MOU's with such entities and will provide written assurances as required. See certification and assurance included within this section.

**(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System**

FDBS maintains cooperative agreements with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. Current FDBS partners and agreements are described below.

**Community Rehabilitation Providers**

FDBS has a long standing contract relationship with their statewide Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) and values the services they provide to our clients. A CRP is defined as a private, non-profit program that provides rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Our CRPs provide education, independent life skills, job training, and job placement services to our clients who are participants in our vocational rehabilitation program and their families. The list of community rehabilitation providers include:

- Center for the Visually Impaired
- Conklin Centers for the Blind
- Elder Care of Alachua County
- Florida Center for the Blind
- Florida Outreach Center for the Blind
- Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
- Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Independence for the Blind of West Florida
- Lighthouse Central Florida
- Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches
- Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind
- Lighthouse of Broward
- Lighthouse of Collier, Inc.
- Lighthouse of Manasota
- Lighthouse of Pinellas
- Lighthouse of the Big Bend
- Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- New Vision for Independence
- Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind
- Lighthouse of Southwest Florida, Inc.

**(d) Coordination with Education Officials**

FDBS updated the interagency agreement coordinating transition services with state education officials in July 2006. It is a state-level agreement, comprising agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and progressing to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. The agencies listed below agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives; collaborate on training and special projects; cooperate in planning and budgeting; and generally support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial. These agencies include:

- Florida Department of Education:
  - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS)
  - VR
  - FDBS
- APD
- Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services
- Florida Department of Children and Families, Mental Health Services

This formal interagency agreement serves as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation among local education agencies and local offices of VR, FDBS, APD, Department of Children and Families, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services.

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

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

**Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities**

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for vocational rehabilitation consumers is completed or updated on a yearly basis and/or as needed prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome.



FDBS transition specialist, with assistance from FDBS rehabilitation technicians, serve as representatives who work with all public high schools statewide and any private high schools requesting assistance. They provide and coordinate outreach and vocational rehabilitation services to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services. Only the counselor may determine a student's eligibility for FDBS vocational rehabilitation services, develop an approved IPE, and sponsor the delivery of necessary transition services to assist the student with planning, preparing for, and achieving successful postsecondary employment.

#### **Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect To:**

##### ***Employment First***

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

##### ***Technical Assistance and Consultation***

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to have written agreements with the FDBS, VR, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services employees. The agreement will enable those employees to consult, coordinate, and provide technical assistance to each other, as well as to students and their families/guardians/surrogates, so they can plan for the student's transition from high school to postsecondary activities and becoming part of the adult community.

##### ***Transition Planning by FDBS and Educational Agency Representatives for Development and Completion of the Individual Educational Plan***

Local education agencies work collaboratively with the FDBS, VR, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process. Local education agencies that are considering transition services during the Individual Educational Plan meeting will invite representatives from any other agency who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, after obtaining permission from the parent, guardian or age-of-majority student. If the agency representative does not attend the meeting, the school will do its best to get someone else to come. If the agency representative will not attend the meeting, the school will then look for alternative ways to provide for the student's transition needs. The local education agency must reconvene the Transition Individual Educational Plan team to identify alternative strategies for providing a student's transition needs if an agency fails to do so.

In order to plan effective transition services for students with disabilities, it is essential that all invited partner agencies encourage and support participation in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process.

FDBS invests 15 percent of its staffing resources to transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the AWARE Case Management System for transition students' data collection and tracking were implemented July 2015 to comply with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The enhancements will enable FDBS to conduct differential analysis and tracking to better evaluate agency performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.



### **(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

FDBS has contracts with private non-profit organizations. Specifically, FDBS provides contracts for four core components: Vocational Rehabilitation, Transition, Supported Employment, and Rehabilitation Engineering. Additionally, some vocational rehabilitation services are purchased through registered vendors. All new vendors/providers, whether through a contractual or vendor relationship, must go through a registration and approval process. FDBS reviews the qualifications of vendors providing services to our customers in order to ensure the quality of these services, as well as the safety of the public. In addition to approving and registering vendor/provider services, FDBS conducts employment verifications on all customer placements facilitated by vendors/contract providers.

FDBS policy ensures that customers may select qualified service providers. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages, and other communication skills. FDBS customers may choose necessary services, service providers, and the setting in which to receive the services; this is specified in the written Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, FDBS has over 22 contracts which include vocational rehabilitation, transition, supported employment, and rehabilitation engineering services.

FDBS currently has one innovation and expansion project through the Florida State University Survey Research Laboratory. This project involves conducting satisfaction surveys of closed FDBS vocational rehabilitation consumers to determine program satisfaction.

FDBS also has collaborative, non-contractual arrangements with other non-profit organizations that provide referrals, other vocational rehabilitation services, and comparable benefits.

### **(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

The FDBS has a contractual agreement with the Florida Lion's Conklin Center for the Blind to identify and provide supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

FDBS partners with other state agencies and organizations in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure individuals with disabilities are offered employment on a preferred basis in planning their lives. Employment First is consistent with the FDBS belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports.

Executive Order 13-284 (Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities) was signed by the Governor of Florida in October 2013. The Order mandates that an Interagency Cooperative



Agreement be developed and requires agencies and organizations to participate in the Agreement. FDBS is one of the mandated partners and played a significant role in drafting the Order.

The following Agencies were named as mandatory partners:

- The Department of Education- Division of Blind Services
- The Department of Education- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Department of Education- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- The Department of Children and Families- Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- The Department of Economic Opportunity
- CareerSource Florida
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

The Interagency Cooperative Agreement formalizes efforts to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and promote collaboration and service innovation.

#### **(g) Coordination with Employers**

FDBS has plans to work collaboratively with the statewide workforce systems through a presence on the workforce boards such as having employees regularly visit workforce centers and other venues. The following strategies will increase partnerships with the statewide workforce investment system:

- Work collaboratively with Florida's one-stop career centers to ensure centers meet accessibility needs of clients both in construction (universal design) and equipment.
- Educate the one-stop career center on the importance of centers being located in areas that are easily accessible to public transportation.
- Work collaboratively to ensure that disability coordinators are cross trained with core partners processes.
- Partner to communicate, strategize and execute agreed upon methods of meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Identify opportunities to expand services/programs to meet ongoing needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Enter into a local memorandum of understanding with the local board, relating to the operation of the one-stop career center system.
- Participate in the operation of the one-stop career center system consistent with the terms of the memorandum of understanding and legal requirements.
- Provide representation on the state board to the extent provided under WIOA.
- Evaluate and refine state and LWDB makeup to include partners that will lead Florida to a more comprehensive workforce development system. Local boards should reflect representation from all core partners.
- Consideration of career centers employing universal design principles in their operations, including such requirements in a career center credentialing tool. It was also suggested that maintaining the integrity of systems for unique constituent populations would be important to be sure job seekers with disabilities are provided every opportunity to be successful.



FDBS plans to utilize and implement the identified strategies listed in section (l) to aid in ensuring that blind and visually-impaired Floridians have the tools, support and opportunities to achieve success. These strategies will assist FDBS provide equal access for clients, increase the number of employers hiring clients, generate FDBS program awareness and strengthen our infrastructure. In SFY 2014-2015, FDBS achieved 761 successful employment outcomes, which is well over the performance standard. FDBS will continue to implement strategies that foster success for our blind and visually impaired Floridians.

#### **(h) Interagency Cooperation**

FDBS will continue to partner statewide with community rehabilitation service providers, employers, and workforce centers, and other partners such as VR, Adult Education, Career Source, Colleges and University System, and the BEESS to expand and improve services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Additionally, FDBS will continue to work in conjunction with the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind for the purpose of reviewing, analyzing and advising the division regarding the performance of responsibilities of the FDBS under Title I of the act. FDBS will also continue to work in unison with the Direct Support Organization. Their purpose is to serve as a Direct Support Organization to the FDBS and people of Florida who are blind. The Foundation is organized and operated to receive proceeds from the Biker's Care license tags; to raise funds; request and receive grants, gifts and bequests; and to manage the assets of the Foundation. Funds of the Foundation are used to support programs of the FDBS; and to conduct programs and activities, and initiate developmental projects for the benefit of citizens of Florida who are blind and or visually impaired.

Moreover, FDBS will incorporate into its FFY 2016-20 Strategic Plan a number of strategies that are anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities. Some of the strategies are:

1.1: Expand opportunities for students to receive FDBS services and secure opportunities for students and youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills.

1.2: Ensure that clients participating in training and education programs are benefiting from engagement.

1.3: Expand utilization of online job systems such as the DEO's Web Portal the state/federal Talent Acquisition Portal, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.

1.4: Encourage and Track industry certifications, apprenticeships and post-secondary outcomes.

1.5: Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Residential Rehabilitation Center to better prepare youth and adults who are blind and visually impaired for success in future employment.

**Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds**

FDBS currently has one continuous innovation and expansion project, described below:

Florida State University Research Laboratory- Conducted a customer satisfaction survey commissioned by FRCB pursuant to Chapter 413.011, Florida Statutes to gather perspectives of former clients of the FDBS Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program concerning program services, levels of satisfaction, and areas for program improvement.

Results gained through the continued customer satisfaction survey, Innovation and Expansion project will contribute to improved employment opportunities for VR clients and service delivery.

FDBS intends to explore new innovation and expansion initiatives to foster and improve services.

**Rehabilitation Technology**

FDBS will continue to provide Rehabilitation Technology services statewide through a contractual agreement between FDBS and the Tampa Lighthouse Rehabilitation Engineering Program. The program provides rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for FDBS clients across all stages of the VR process. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices that supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services like job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment.

Additionally, FDBS provides purchased assistive technology equipment to blind and visually impaired clients based on need and assessment.

FDBS partners with the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) as a resource for blind and visually impaired clients to access needed equipment to help them obtain independence.

FAAST services provides for the coordination and delivery of appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis. FAAST, is a not-for-profit corporation for which the Assistive Technology Advisory Council acts as the board of directors, manages the project, and provides administrative and technical support to the council. FAAST is responsible for administering a low interest loan authority that provides funding to individuals with disabilities who may be unable to qualify for traditional loans and bank financing to purchase assistive technology devices.

Assistive technology includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation.



FDBS continues to assess its services to individuals with most significant disabilities as well as individuals who are considered as a part of unserved or underserved populations and minorities. In addition, FDBS has identified the following strategies to address this population. Initial implementation of the strategies began during May 2014; a refined data collection instrument was put in place in July 2014. District offices submit monthly data reports that are compiled and analyzed by the state office. Improvements to enhance district follow-through, are evaluated and implemented on an ongoing basis. Strategies include the following:

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

Results of the FFY 2014 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment indicated a need to improve services to minorities. Specifically, the needs assessment revealed that the only minority group that may be underserved is persons of Hispanic/Latino origin. Thus, FDBS will continue to explore partnership opportunities with community based organizations and will develop contact lists of other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities. Also, FDBS will continue to identify outreach activities conducted by field offices for under-represented populations. FDBS will assess its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements.

FDBS has a long standing relationship with statewide CRPs and value the services they provide to our clients. A CRP is defined as a private, non-profit program that provides rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Our CRPs provide education, independent life skills, job training, and job placement services to our clients who are participants in our vocational rehabilitation program and their families.

Through effective programs, proven curricula, certified instructors and years of personal, professional experience and collaboration with FDBS, our CRPs work to ensure that individuals of all backgrounds have the tools they need to lead productive, independent lives while pursuing their vocational goals.



FDBS is committed to continuing to strengthen and develop statewide collaborative partnerships with new and existing community rehabilitation providers by providing support, strengthening contract language to ensure increased contractor accountability, and improving available resource allocations to CRPs.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has not released final regulations related to WIOA nor the Vocational Rehabilitation-Blind Agencies performance indicators. When these final regulations are released, FDBS will modify the appropriate state plan sections to reflect the RSA final regulations with respect to performance indicators.

Under the previous performance indicators, FDBS was successful in meeting its requirements over a three year period with the exception of indicator 1.2. However, SFY 2014-2015 FDBS exceeded this indicator. Below are the previous performance indicator outcomes:



**Figure 10.01**  
**Performance Standards and Indicators**

Standard	SFY 2014-2015	SFY 2013-2014	Difference	Met
1.1 Number of closed cases with an employment outcome	761	713	48	Met
1.2 Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome	59.27%	50.28%	-15.17%	Not Met
1.3 Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that has a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage	98.29%	99.02%	.74%	Met
1.4 Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that has a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage and have significant disabilities	100%	100%	0%	Met
1.5 Ratio of average state wage to the average wage of closed cases with employment outcome that have wages greater than or equal to minimum wage	0.68%	0.65%	-4.41%	Met
1.6 Difference between the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self-support at application and the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self-support at closure	45.25%	40.93%	-9.55%	Met
2.1 Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate	0.91	0.9	-1.10	Met



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

2.1: Increase the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.

2.2: Implement a comprehensive communications and outreach plan.

2.3: Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.

2.4: Increase outreach services to under-served and un-served population.

2.5: Expand utilization of online job systems such as the DEO's web portal the state/federal TAP, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.

2.6: Encourage and Track industry certifications, apprenticeships and post-secondary outcomes.

### **(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

#### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

There is no state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration of vocational rehabilitation counselors; therefore, the FDBS indicates that specific personnel must meet the academic standards which are located within this document. Personnel information related to hiring and staff records are maintained in the state of Florida's human resource system, PeopleFirst. A staff directory is also kept by the Bureau of Client Services that indicates the caseload of each district office staff serving FDBS clients. Data is exported from People First indicating staff vacancies and personnel enrolled in the DROP. Each employee in the DROP Program must terminate on a specific date which enables the division to predict, to the extent possible, when vacancies will occur. Moreover, FDBS will work to develop procedures that would allow supervisors to be notified of employees who are in the DROP 12 months prior to their term date.



The following table identifies personnel who were employed by the state agency during SFY 2014-2015 and coordinated vocational rehabilitation services:

**Figure 10.02**  
**Personnel Employed by FDBS**

Staff Title	Number of Staff
Administrative Staff	50
Counselor Staff	53
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities	59
Other Staff	96
Total	258

In relation to the chart above, administrative staff include: district administrators, vocational rehabilitation supervisors, rehabilitation center supervisor, and select state office program staff. Staff supporting counselors include, rehabilitation technician, rehabilitation specialist, and residential instructors. Other staff include select state office staff, staff assistants, sr. word processing systems operators, and word processing systems operation rehabilitation center staff. To address the requirements under the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) related to pre-employment transition, FDBS reclassified a Government Operations Consultant II position from the Contracts Unit for the purpose of securing a Transition Program Consultant position in the Bureau of Client Services. This reclassification increased the number of Administrative Staff by one and decreased the number of Other Staff by one.

Most personnel do not provide direct services to clients and are not included in the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements. Agency personnel directly affected by these approved CSPD requirements include the following positions:

- District Administrators
- District Supervisors
- Rehabilitation Counselors providing services to vocational rehabilitation participants

Vocational rehabilitation staff who were hired in 2011 are required to meet CSPD standards and have until 2016 to obtain the academic standards. Individuals hired in subsequent years who do not meet the standard have five years to do so. Those individuals hired in 2014 will have until 2019 to meet the standard; those hired in 2015 will have until 2020, and so on. Paraprofessionals (e.g., Rehabilitation Technicians and Employment Placement Specialists Personnel) and support personnel (e.g., word processors) are not directly identified as part of the approved CSPD plan; however, FDBS still provides them with training to ensure quality services to all participants.

In SFY 2014-2015, FDBS served 5,202 individuals in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. During SFY 2013-2014, FDBS served 5,225 clients (23 less clients). The average ratio of customers per counselor was 75 to 1 in the VR Program. A comparison of the previous year indicates a slight change in the ratio of customers served per counselor (See Counselor to Client Ratio Table below). This slight change in the total number of clients served is attributed to a decrease in the number of applicants who met the eligibility criteria. Specifically, for SFY 2014-2015, FDBS had 1,876 applicants while in the SFY 2013-2014, there were 1,974 applicants. Data to determine the counselor to client ratio was obtained from the Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment (AWARE) case management system.



**Figure 10.03**  
**Counselor to Client Ratio**

State Fiscal Year	Number served	Ratio (person served/counselor)
2015	5,202	75
2014	5,225	74
2013	5,242	64

In SFY 2014-2015, the successful closure outcomes increased from 713 to 761, when compared to SFY 2013-2014. FDBS attributes this success to becoming fully staffed with Employment Placement Specialists (EPS), which ensured that each district office had targeted support for job placement services. Additionally, FDBS strengthened its relationship with Community Rehabilitation Partners and local employment networks by holding monthly meetings, trainings and joint activities related to job placement.

The table below provides the number of staff by job titles serving vocational rehabilitation clients; the number of positions, the current vacancies; and the projected vacancies over the next five years.

**Figure 10.04**  
**Personnel Serving Vocational Rehabilitation Clients: Vacancy Information**

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies Over 5 Years
District Administrator	10	2	4
Supervisor	13	2	4
Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist	53	9	8

The FDBS works closely with VR to track the number and type of graduate students that are enrolled in state universities offering rehabilitation counseling degrees. Additionally, district administrators in the same geographic region of a university build relationships with the institutions of higher education by providing presentations, addressing students and informing key personnel of anticipated or current vacancies.

The following Florida state universities offer rehabilitation graduate programs:

- Florida International University, Miami, Florida
- University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida



Each of the following seven state universities offer a graduate counseling degree that fulfills the educational requirements for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification with a minimum of other required classes.

- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida International University
- Florida State University
- University of Central Florida
- University of Florida
- University of North Florida
- University of South Florida

**Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education**

The following information is derived from Florida institutions of higher education that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals. The information is categorized by institution and type of program.

**Institution:** Florida International University

**Type of Program:** Master of Science in Counselor Education – Rehabilitation Counseling Track (MS)

**Number and Type of Students Enrolled:** 5 MS

**Number of Graduates Eligible for CRC Certification:** 4

**Number of Graduates Anticipated:**

- 2014 – 2 MS
- 2015 – 3 MS

**Institution:** University of South Florida

**Type of Program:** Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling (MA)

**Number and Type of Students Enrolled:** 117 graduate students

**Number of Graduates Eligible for CRC Certification:** 43

**Number of Graduates Anticipated:**

- 2014 – 41 MA
- 2015 – 50 MA

None of the graduates in the referenced educational programs were sponsored by Rehabilitation Services Administration. The division acknowledges that there are a number of graduate level counseling related majors at public state universities that qualify graduates for CRC certification.



All Florida state employees are able to take up to six credit hours per semester using the Florida Tuition Waiver Program. FDBS expects employees who do not meet CSPD requirements to take advantage of the state's tuition waiver program or participate in federal grant/stipend programs (i.e., Auburn, San Diego State University). When necessary, FDBS may pay for tuition, e.g., when a state university is not within driving distance, or when a staff member is unable to use tuition waiver for any required courses.

### **Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel. Include the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit 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.

FDBS annually updates plans for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

FDBS has used and will continue to use People First for recruitment efforts. Additionally, personnel must be hired using minimum qualifications with the expectation that standards will be met within a specified period of time.

The Division has implemented recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel strategies to meet known barriers. Salary issues have been the number one factor impacting recruitment and retention. FDBS has been focusing on recruiting persons with disabilities and referring employment opportunities to disability organizations. FDBS is an equal opportunity employer and hires persons with and without disabilities at all levels of employment.

Specific recruitment strategies include the following:

- When cash resources are available, FDBS awards \$2,000 to the vocational rehabilitation specialist base salary upon receipt of CRC on a one time basis. If a vocational rehabilitation specialist has CRC Certification when they are hired, his/her beginning salary is set at \$2,000 above the base salary.
- FDBS will continue to work with the current state universities that provide master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling. Activities include attending board meetings and presentations to college classes upon request to share pertinent information related to the Division and recruitment efforts.
- FDBS routinely encourages clients who have pursued Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling to apply for vacant positions.
- When feasible, FDBS will also seek legislative approval to increase the base salaries of counseling staff to be more competitive with comparable positions within the state.

Specific retention strategies include the following:

- FDBS provides current personnel the opportunity to obtain higher salaries if they receive their CRC. When feasible, FDBS will also seek legislative approval to increase the base salaries of existing counseling staff to be more competitive with comparable positions within the state.

**Personnel Standards**

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

- Standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
- To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking, and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- Specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- The specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- Procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- The identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards; and
- The identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Due to difficulty in hiring individuals who meet the current CRC certification standards, FDBS routinely hires personnel who meet the academic standards. Personnel who have a master's degree in a discipline other than counseling need to meet the following academic course work.



For this degree to be considered a related degree, in addition to the master's degree, the individual will be required to document at least 18 credit hours of coursework at the master's level or above, acquired post-master's, in the core areas as follows:

- One graduate course with a primary focus on the Theories and Techniques of Counseling. (This is a basic requirement for future consideration of relatedness of degree.)
- Three graduate courses, each with a primary focus in one of the following areas:
  - Occupational Information
  - Job Development and Placement
  - Medical Aspects of Disabilities
  - Foundations of Rehabilitation
  - Psychological Aspects of Disabilities
  - Personal and Vocational Adjustment
- Two graduate courses, each with a primary focus in one of the following areas:
  - Assessment
  - Research Methodology
  - Vocational and Career Development
  - Community Resources
  - Case Management
  - Delivery of Rehabilitation Services
- A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major course of study in a social, behavioral or rehabilitative science, education or visual disabilities, and two years of professional experience involving direct services to rehabilitation clients.
- A master's degree from an accredited college or university with major course of study in one of the above areas can substitute for one year of the required experience.

Additionally, in 2011, FDBS transferred existing staff who previously served other clients (blind babies, children, independent living adult programs) to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Existing staff who are transferred under the FDBS reorganization will be required to meet these standards by 2016. Individuals hired in subsequent years who do not meet the standard have five years from their hire or transfer date to do so. Thus, individuals hired in 2012 will have until 2017 to meet the standard; those hired in 2013 will have until 2018, and so on.

All newly hired vocational rehabilitation counseling staff not meeting CSPD requirements will complete and update their CSPD Education Plan on an annual basis.

Individuals who are hired for positions requiring master's degrees have five years from the time hired to meet standards, allowing date adjustments based on an academic year. Persons who have master's degrees in areas other than rehabilitation counseling or counseling have two years to obtain required courses noted on their CSPD Education Plan, allowing date adjustments based on an academic year.



The CSPD Education Plan includes the following types of information:

- A description of current educational status;
- The courses to be taken during the year;
- The timeframe in which the required education will be completed;
- The institution that the individual will attend; and
- Annual progress reports on course completion.

FDBS has implemented statewide procedures. Division Procedure 12.12 was updated in 2013 to comply with federal mandates relative to sponsorship of certification exam and application fees. The procedure addresses issues that include payment of educational expenses by FDBS, class attendance, individual education plans, class assignments and homework, use of FDBS computer equipment, and professional certification. FDBS tracks the current educational status of personnel as well as their progress in complying with the CSPD requirements. The following table indicates the CRC eligibility status of staff by position.

**Figure 10.05**  
**FDBS Personnel Standards by Position SFY 2014-2015**

Position Description	Vacancy	Not Eligible	Eligible	Total
Rehabilitation Services District Admin-Blind -SES	2	3	2	7
Rehabilitation Supervisor-Blind - SES	2	3	3	8
Senior Rehabilitation Specialist-Blind	9	29	8	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>61</b>

FDBS encourages personnel to obtain certification from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. Currently, FDBS has 22 personnel who earned the CRC designation as of SFY 2014-2015.

FDBS has been granted the authority by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification to provide Continuing Education Units (CEU) for all Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The five year in-service training grant will expire on September 30, 2015. FDBS will continue to provide training for ongoing CEUs, especially in the area of ethics using the vocational rehabilitation basic support grant funding. FDBS's reimbursement policy for certification is also addressed in the Division Policy 12.12, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development as required by federal regulations.

### Staff Development

FDBS monitors personnel development needs on an annual basis. Training is provided through the VR basic support grant. FDBS has based its core training programs on the areas emphasized in the federal regulations: rehabilitation technology, career guidance and counseling, job development, placement and assessment. Additional training will be provided to ensure that staff have a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of the evolving labor force. FDBS will also seek opportunities to coordinate training FFAST.



In brief, the training needs assessment is an ongoing process that consists of: ensuring compliance of federal and state mandates and; examining individual personnel training requirements related to current job performance, future job requirements, and promotional or career advancement needs.

Based on analysis of training needs compiled from performance reviews, the FDBS Strategic Plan, consumer comments, training evaluations and surveys, training will be provided in the following areas:

- Expanding staff knowledge of serving individuals with dual disabilities (where individuals have a primary disability of blindness and a dual disability that is not related to vision);
- Overcoming employment barriers for visually impaired consumers with a criminal history; and
- Providing rehabilitation counseling for individuals with visual impairment and substance abuse issues and/or psychiatric disorders.

In keeping with this theme, it has been determined that counselors would benefit from training in the area of supported employment, identifying appropriate candidates, and working through the rehabilitation process with these individuals, and recording accurate information for federal reports. All counselors are provided annual training in career counseling and assessment.

Given that job placement and development are pivotal elements to client success, FDBS mandates all vocational rehabilitation counselors, vocational rehabilitation supervisors, and vocational rehabilitation specialists to participate in three levels of training. The three levels are: assessment, job development and placement.

In the first level, training is concentrated on the process of developing jobs which include: generation of leads, selection for time management purposes, holding face-to-face meetings with employers to identify needs and closing the deal (actual placement). Vocational rehabilitation staff is presented with a comprehensive manual, including group exercises and the completion of planners, in order to prepare meetings and to work with objections and barriers. This level of training builds a tool for self-assessment of the staff as job developers.

The second level is focused on job placement and development as it relates to clients. Vocational rehabilitation staff is trained to identify the essential elements needed to obtain/maintain a job including motivation, abilities, access to employers and credibility. In this second level, staff learn intervention tools and marketing strategies to manage their caseloads as job developers.

A third level is provided to vocational rehabilitation supervisors and district administrators by explaining how to set up placement goals and how to monitor and coach daily activities from their staff, as related to the FDBS business model in job placement and development.

FDBS has developed a two-tiered rehabilitation technology training program for all professional and paraprofessional personnel. This training includes a week long introduction to rehabilitation technology for blind and visually impaired individuals. The second level of training incorporates the use of rehabilitation technology in job development activities. Currently, FDBS offers a third level for personnel who completed the second level five or more years ago to ensure personnel possess current knowledge related to technology advances.

All existing rehabilitation specialists, senior rehabilitation specialists, supervisors, and district administrators have been trained in both levels. FDBS will continue to train new personnel in both levels, as well as conduct annual training to update existing personnel on new technology issues.

**Dissemination of Knowledge from Research and other Resources**

All FDBS personnel members have internet access and are provided with relevant rehabilitation research and information websites. Each FDBS District Office is required to provide a quarterly in-service training for personnel on topics such as blindness rehabilitation, informed choice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Social Security work incentives. When funding is available, employees are encouraged to attend various conferences in the field of rehabilitation or blindness.

**Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

FDBS maintains or obtains the services of individuals who can communicate in the native languages or other appropriate modes of communication of applicants or eligible individuals. Most FDBS offices in highly populated areas of non-English speaking consumers have personnel who speak in the native languages of those individuals. FDBS requires that language interpreter services (including sign language) be purchased when necessary to communicate with an applicant or eligible individual. FDBS has the capability to print in Braille and large print. Documents such as application for services, Client Rights, guidelines for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment, and informational brochures are available in appropriate formats (i.e. large print, Braille, Spanish) or are communicated by way of an interpreter.

**Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**

FDBS has a cooperative agreement with the Florida Department of Education's Division of Public Schools in order to coordinate activities serving students who are blind and visually impaired. This is accomplished through the preparation and implementation of guidelines, policies, rules, and regulations that affect the interests of students with visual impairments through joint planning committees and publications, as appropriate.

Both divisions promote and provide training for teachers and FDBS personnel who work with students who are blind and visually impaired. FDBS shares information and coordinates other activities with the Division of Public Schools in order to increase public awareness of visual disabilities and services available to students with visual impairments.



### (j) **Statewide Assessment**

FDBS commissioned a three-year comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) to investigate the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant visual disabilities. This research study was led by Michele Cappella-McDonald, Ph.D., Interim Director and Research Professor for the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. She was assisted by Anne Hierholzer, Mid-west Political Science Association Research Associate.

The Needs Assessment addressed the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which states that each state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) must conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of its residents and in particular, needs for supported employment services, needs of minorities and other unserved/underserved populations, needs of persons served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system, and the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs. This work took place during the period of March 3, 2014 through June 30, 2015 and examined a six year period of data (October 2008 through September 2013).

**This research was guided by the following six questions:**

1. What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, particularly the vocational rehabilitation service needs of these individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?
2. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of minorities?
3. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program?
4. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?
5. What is the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?
6. What are the biggest barriers to achieving employment for those consumers closed unsuccessfully?



To address the research questions, the following sources of data were utilized for the CSNA:

1. Consumer surveys – The target group will be those persons closed *after receiving services* from FDBS during a previous one year period (FFY 2013: October 2012 –September 2013). Consumers closed unsuccessfully will be asked additional questions to address question 6.
2. DBS staff surveys – This survey will include all staff that provide services to consumers.
3. Key informant interviews – Interviews with 5 to 10 people identified by FDBS as key informants.
4. Employer surveys – FDBS will provide email addresses of businesses that they have worked with FDBS during the previous one or two years (OPTIONAL).
5. Existing data sources
  - a. ACS
  - b. Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research population projections
  - c. Bureau of Labor Statistics labor/economic forecasts
  - d. DBS case service data (RSA-911 data)
  - e. Consumer satisfaction data collected for FDBS

### Study's Results

The large amount of data collected and analyzed for this project was reviewed to identify the most significant needs that emerged from the data. Specifically, there were eight most important needs identified as listed below. FDBS intends to develop strategies to address the identified needs in section (o).

1. Employment-related services
2. Develop and strengthen employer relationships
3. Services to minorities
4. Assistive technology services
5. Increased outreach and community visibility
6. Transportation
7. CRPs
8. Regular follow-up with consumers

**Employment Related Services**

Although employment-related services were not the area consumers reported as having the greatest initial need, consumers still indicated they needed employment related services after their initial cases were closed. The top 10 services with remaining needs were all related to employment, and more than half of the consumers who reported a need for these services had a remaining need after case closure. Some consumers also reported in open-ended responses that they did not receive the help they needed with finding employment, and suggested providing more employment-related assistance as a recommendation to help FDBS improve services.

**Develop and Strengthen Employer Relationships**

A majority of staff reported a critical need to improve placement services by developing and strengthening relationships with employers (and other organizations). This was the highest rated need overall, with 57.6% of staff considering it a critical need and 34.3% considering it a moderate need. The most common suggestion by staff to improve employer relationships was to allow staff to be out in the community more, making connections. Several people mentioned the value of attending Chamber of Commerce meetings, and some suggested that FDBS should pay for staff membership or fees to participate in business or community organizations.

**Services to Minorities**

Although improving services to consumers with diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds was not rated as a high level of need by staff across the state, staff in some districts did rate this as a critical need. Improving the availability of materials to non-English speaking consumers was rated as a most important need by staff (77.8% rated as critical or moderate). More than one-third of staff identified minority group members as people who were unserved or underserved by FDBS, although the specific minority groups they mentioned varied. The need for better outreach to minority populations was also expressed by several key informants.

**Assistive Technology Services**

Another recurring theme was the need to improve Assistive Technology services. The top three needs identified by consumers were all related to assistive technology. Providing training in assistive technology, providing or recommending low vision aids, and providing instruction using computer assistive technology. Relatively high levels of needs remained in these areas after receipt of FDBS services.

In open-ended responses, consumers who were closed unsuccessfully identified receipt of AT as something that could have been done differently to help them obtain employment. In the staff survey, 88.9% of staff reported a critical or moderate need for improving AT training. The majority of key informants also identified AT services as a rehabilitation need of consumers. Staff suggestions for improving trainings include standardizing curriculum, making an effort to stay up-to-date on the most in-demand technology and job skills, and reworking trainings to make them more frequent and/or in-depth. Several staff also suggested that individualized AT training be offered and that training should be focused on what the consumer will need to become employed.

**Increased Outreach and Community Visibility**

The need to increase awareness of FDBS was emphasized in numerous ways throughout the needs assessment and was related to some of the other important needs identified. Some sources indicated that there may be community groups who remain largely unaware of FDBS' existence, with minority groups being a particular concern. Analysis of the population served by FDBS shows that Hispanic/Latino individuals are currently underrepresented in the FDBS caseload, which may indicate a lack of knowledge in that population regarding available resources. In order to remedy this, key informants and FDBS staff alike suggested working with liaisons who can serve as ambassadors for their communities. Key informants and staff also saw a need to provide FDBS materials in multiple languages and to employ bilingual staff and/or hire interpreters. Another aspect of outreach that came up repeatedly is the need to improve FDBS' visibility in the business community. Staff members thought job placement efforts would be improved if more employers knew about FDBS and its offerings.

**Transportation**

Although information was not available from all data sources, transportation was identified as an important need by several sources. Consumers identified lack of transportation to work as one of their primary barriers to employment. Several consumers who participated in the 2013-14 satisfaction survey indicated dissatisfaction with transportation as a service received from FDBS. Lack of transportation was also the top barrier to employment identified by staff for consumers who are closed unsuccessfully. Key informants considered transportation to be a need for the population, and also a challenge to meeting the other needs of consumers. Lack of transportation options, particularly in rural areas, was discussed as a problem by both key informants and staff.

**Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)**

Although consumers were not asked directly for their opinions about CRPs who provided their services, we can consider consumer responses on satisfaction with services received and consumer report of needs that remained after their cases were closed. Consumers expressed high levels of satisfaction regarding training received, with the exception of employment-related services. Remaining needs after case closure for typical blindness training areas (e.g., instruction in cane travel, AT, braille) were lower than many other services areas, although the need was still high in some (e.g., 50.7% reported a remaining need for braille instruction).

FDBS continues to review consumer and agency needs to make modifications to contracts with CRPs. The agency expects more changes as a result of changes required under WIOA and the review of data. There is also a recognition that some rural areas of the state leaves some potential client populations without adequate or reasonable access to services. FDBS will work with existing providers to fill these gaps, explore the need for additional satellite services, additional CRPs and/or provide services via other contracts or purchase orders with qualified entities.

**Regular follow-up with consumers**

Multiple contributors to the Needs Assessment suggested that FDBS could improve the follow-up services it provides to consumers after their cases have been closed. As part of the employer survey, employers suggested they would appreciate more consistent communication from FDBS, including visits to the workplace, after a consumer has been placed. Key informants and staff alike also mentioned a need for ongoing consumer support and consistent follow-up, especially for the most significantly disabled population.

**Research Questions Results**

Six questions guided the design of this study and the development of the surveys. Below are the results of each of the research questions:

1. **What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, particularly the vocational rehabilitation service needs of these individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?**

The top five rehabilitation needs reported by all consumers were: (1) Low vision aids or devices, (2) Training in assistive technology, (3) Instruction using computer assistive technology, (4) Help exploring career options, and (5) Instruction in cane travel. These were also the top five rehabilitation needs for consumers with the Most Significant Disabilities (MSD). Needs in areas related to employment were the greatest. Approximately one-quarter of consumers with the MSD reported a need for a job coach. Only 2.9% of consumers served and closed in FFY 2013 had a supported employment goal on their IPE; those who had a supported employment goal were significantly less likely to obtain competitive employment.

Key informants identified assistive technology, blindness skills training (including independent living skills), and vocational training for job-specific skills as the most important rehabilitation needs of those with the MSD. The most important needs of consumers with MSD identified by staff (in an open-ended question) were better service delivery, better training for these consumers, and increased opportunities for meaningful work. The three items on the staff survey that involved Supported Employment (SE) were rated as moderately important needs, with a larger percentage rating them as moderate rather than critical needs. Providing a broader array of placement services for consumers involved in SE was the highest rated of these needs, with 84.7% rating it as a critical or moderate need.

2. **What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of minorities?**

Improving services to minorities was one of the key areas identified as a need. In terms of identifying minorities' rehabilitation needs, key informants indicated that better outreach is needed to these groups and that language barriers were a problem. Several key informants also commented that some members of minority groups have lower socioeconomic status, resulting in additional challenges and service needs. Consumers' self-report of their needs is another source of information, and the top three needs were the same for minorities as they were for white consumers: (1) Low vision aids or devices, (2) Training in assistive technology, (3) Instruction using computer assistive technology, (4) Information to help you understand blindness, and (5) Help exploring career options. A much greater percentage of minority consumers reported a need for information about blindness, compared to white consumers, while the percentage reporting a need for the other services were similar.



**3. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program?**

Comparing the Florida population to the population that received services, the only minority group that appears to be underserved is persons of Hispanic/Latino origin (they represent 23.3% of the population but only 12.3% of the population who received services). One key informant identified the Hispanic/Latino population as being underserved, and minority groups were identified as an unserved or underserved population by staff (with multiple specific groups mentioned). Staff and some key informants identified rural residents as comprising an unserved/underserved group. Transportation was identified as a major problem/need area for rural consumers. Consumers with multiple disabilities (including deaf-blind) and school-aged children were other groups identified as unserved or underserved by multiple key informants. Some key informants commented that school-aged youth were unserved, but should be receiving services at that age to help with employment outcomes later.

**4. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired served through other components of the statewide Workforce Investment System (WIS)?**

Key informants reported that the WIS is not accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired; one commented that WIS would refer anyone who is blind or visually impaired to FDBS. Staff believed it was important for FDBS to work more closely with other components of the WIS to provide services to consumers (87.7% indicated this was a moderate or critical need for improvement).

**5. What is the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?**

Information regarding this question was available from the staff survey and the key informant interviews. CRPs were identified as one of the important areas of need based on responses by these two groups. Both groups felt there was room for improvement in the current CRPs, and that the state could benefit from additional CRPs.

**6. What are the biggest barriers to achieving employment for those consumers closed unsuccessfully?**

According to consumers who were closed unsuccessfully, the biggest barriers reported were: (a) lack of jobs, (b) lack of transportation to job site, (c) difficulty with travel skills, (d) lack of accommodations, and (e) lack of needed vocational rehabilitation. The most common reasons former consumers who were closed unsuccessfully gave for leaving their rehabilitation programs are (a) case was closed by FDBS, (b) completed their program, (c) didn't need the services, (d) never received services or weren't getting any help from FDBS, (e) poor health or medical reasons, or (f) had a problem with their counselor or FDBS.

Additionally, Staff were asked to identify barriers to employment for consumers closed unsuccessfully. The most commonly mentioned barriers were (a) lack of transportation, (b) lack of consumer motivation, (c) lack of consumer cooperation, (d) lack of consumer experience, job skills, education, and/or training, and (e) health problems. Other than transportation, the barriers that staff identifies are related to internal issues with the consumer, while the consumers themselves primarily identify external barriers. Some of the barriers identified (by both groups) that could potentially be addressed by FDSB are: education/skill level/training, travel skills, transportation, and accommodations.



FDBS consumers who are more likely to be closed unsuccessfully are (a) racial minority group members (does not include Hispanic/Latino), (b) people with lower education levels, (c) people with an IEP while in secondary school, (d) people with the most significant disabilities, (e) people who did not receive rehabilitation technology services, and (f) people who receive Social Security Administration benefits.

Based upon the results of the 2014 Needs Assessment, FDBS has developed strategies to address the identified needs. These strategies are listed in section (l) and (o).

#### **(k) Annual Estimates**

FDBS estimates that the number of individuals to be eligible for services in the state and served during SFY 2015/2016 will be approximately 5,450. Of this number, FDBS estimates that approximately 100 will be provided services under the Title VI, Part B program. Estimates were based on a review of historical information such as:

- The number of individuals served – 5,202
- The average caseload size – 75;
- The number of applications – 1,876;
- The number of Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) written – 1,306; and
- The number of consumers who continue to require services from one year to the next – 3,528.

The estimated cost per person for the provision of traditional vocational rehabilitation services is \$4,335. The cost is based on taking the total amount of vocational rehabilitation dollars spent in SFY 2014-2015, excluding expenditures for the Supported Employment (\$133,608) and Bureau of Business Enterprise (BBE) Program (\$3,221,695). The vocational rehabilitation services expenditures were \$22,551,277 divided by the number of persons served 5,202. This is shown in the formula below:

- $\$22,551,277 / 5,202 = \$4,335$

The vocational rehabilitation services estimated cost per person for SFY 2014-2015 dollar value was \$114.74 less than the previous SFY (2013-2014), which was \$4,449.74. FDBS attributes this to the slight decrease in the number of clients served during SFY 2014-2015.

The cost for individuals served under Supported Employment for SFY 2014-2015 was \$2,344 per person. This is based on the total amount of supported employment dollars spent, \$133,608 (as discussed in section X(n)) divided by the number of persons served under Supported Employment, 57. This is shown in the formula below:

- $\$133,608 / 57 = \$2,344$

It is estimated that the SFY 2015/2016 Supported Employment cost per person will range between \$2,000 and \$9,000. Details regarding supported employment are outlined in section X(n).

FDBS is not currently under an order of selection so cost of services by priority category is not provided.



## (I) **State Goals and Priorities**

The goals and priorities are based on the CSNA, Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA), strategic plan, requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This section should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

FDBS modified its state goals and priorities. To assist in the development of the goals and priorities, FDBS conducted two public meetings to collect stakeholder input. The goals and new strategies were derived from stakeholder input, the DOE strategic plan and results of the CSNA. FDBS discussed goals and strategies with the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and has incorporated feedback received by the Council.

There are four goals that will address the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. These goals, strategies, and measures are as follows:

- Highest Client Achievement
- Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access
- Skilled Workforce and Economic Development
- Quality Efficient Services

### **Goal 1.0 Highest Client Achievement**

Objective: Coordinate and secure high quality training, education, work experiences and partnerships that create opportunities for blind and visually impaired Floridians to obtain and maintain independence, post-secondary education credentials, and successful employment outcomes.

Strategy 1.1: Expand opportunities for students to receive FDBS services and secure opportunities for students and youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based on a review and analysis of outcome data.

Strategy 1.2: Ensure that clients participating in training and education programs are benefiting from engagement.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by evaluating the gains (measurable progress) that clients achieve through training and educational programs.

Strategy 1.3: Expand utilization of online job systems such as the DEO's Web Portal the state/federal Talent Acquisition Portal, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by the completion of steps to have FDBS clients entered into and connecting with electronic systems where employers engage the talent of individuals with disabilities and result effect of clients gaining employment.



Strategy 1.4: Encourage and Track industry certifications, apprenticeships and post-secondary outcomes.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by the percentage of participants who engage in apprenticeships programs, and those who attain industry certifications, a post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma within one year after exit.

Strategy 1.5: Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Residential Rehabilitation Center to better prepare youth and adults who are blind and visually impaired for success in future employment.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon the number of training sessions provided, the number of people who obtain successful employment and an analysis of outcome data.

## **Goal 2.0 Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access**

Objective: Create a comprehensive service delivery system that fosters accessibility and provides positive experiences for blind and visually impaired Floridians enabling them to matriculate from school/training to work. Improve outreach methods to reach more consumers, advocates, providers, employers and other stakeholders.

Strategy 2.1: Increase the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon a review and analysis of outcome data.

Strategy 2.2: Implement a comprehensive communications and outreach plan.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based on the development of a communication plan, comparative data, and the number of program referrals.

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by reviewing and analyzing outcome data.

Strategy 2.4: Increase outreach services to under-served and un-served population.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by comparing baseline demographic client data on the number of individuals served in succeeding program years.



Strategy 2.5: Work with each client to ensure that IEP goals are consistent with and/or are amenable to transportation resources.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based on research results.

### **Goal 3.0 Skilled Workforce and Economic Development**

Objective: Assist blind and visually impaired Floridians with obtaining, maintaining and advancing in competitive integrated employment.

Strategy 3.1: Develop and strengthen employer relationships by providing employer training, support, education and resources related to employing individuals with visual impairment and provide support for employers with compliance with Section 503 regulations.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by standards established by the USDOL, USDOE and other state measures developed within the division.

Strategy 3.2: Increase successful employment outcomes including self-employment outcomes for transition age youth, adults, and seniors receiving services through FDBS.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based on comparative data on the number of successful employment outcomes.

Strategy 3.3: Create successful job outcomes in the BBE

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon the number of FDBS clients successfully completing the Bureau of Business Enterprise Program, and the percentage of licensed vendors staying at their first facility for at least 12 months.

Strategy 3.4: Support FDBS clients in becoming self-supporting.

Measure: A review of the median earnings of participants will be analyzed during second quarter after exit.

Strategy 3.5: Strengthen statewide collaborative partnerships with core partners (CareerSource Florida, DEO, DCAE, VR, community rehabilitation providers and employers).

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon a review and analysis of outcome data.

Strategy 3.6: Developing mechanisms to maximize job placement effectiveness among FDBS Job Placement Specialists and contracted service providers.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by examining the overall increase in job placements in the next SFY year, as well as by totaling the number of placements made by both FDBS and service provider's staff.

Strategy 3.7: Support and track successful employment outcomes for blind Floridians with significant and most significant disabilities for a period of one year.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by analyzing the percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment after exit during the second and fourth quarter.

Strategy 3.8: Pilot the Vermont Progressive Employment Model.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by the number of employment outcomes generated from the



Vermont Model.

Strategy 3.9: Identify an approach to expedite eligibility and service delivery to individuals who are at risk of losing employment.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based on outcome data.

#### **Goal 4.0 Quality Efficient Services**

Objective: Create an accountable and exemplary division workforce that ensures high quality services.

Strategy 4.1: Increase staff development and continuing education.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by assessing the number of employees participating in continuing education opportunities, the amount and types of additional training provided and obtaining employee feedback (surveys).

Strategy 4.2: Align FDBS policies and procedures to address new WIOA requirements.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by providing a listing of policies that are, or have been reviewed and revised to reflect WIOA requirements during the plan period.

Strategy 4.3: Increase opportunities for data sharing and improve data validity and integrity.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by developing data sharing agreements establishing a mechanism to ensure data validity and integrity.

Strategy 4.4: Decrease audit findings from the Offices of the Inspector General, Auditor General and the Rehabilitation Services Administration through adherence to policies and procedures.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon results of State and Federal Audit Findings.

Strategy 4.5: Develop strong fiscal policies and procedures to promote responsible stewardship of available resources and addresses WIOA requirements.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon results of the Fiscal Encumbrance Report and monthly reconciliations of expenditures and encumbrances along with any specific fiscal audit findings.

Strategy 4.6: Strengthen contract language to ensure increased contractor accountability, improve resource allocations, address WIOA regulations and encourage maximum achievement of consumer independence.

Measure: This strategy will be measured by the results of contract performance, the ability to leverage resources.

Strategy 4.7: Strengthen contract monitoring activities, and procedures/protocol to reflect new requirements.

Measure: This strategy will be measured based upon the results of federal and state audit findings.



**Strategy 4.8:** Work collaboratively with AWARE Case Management System provider to align FDBS case management system with WIOA requirements

**Measure:** This strategy will be measured by implementation of system upgrades as it relates to WIOA requirements.

**Note:** The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has not released their final regulations related to WIOA. When RSA does release their final regulations related to WIOA, FDBS reserves the right to modify the state plan goals and priorities to reflect the new regulations.

#### **(m) Order of Selection**

This section not required

#### **(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds**

Pursuant to Florida Statute 413, FDBS is mandated to provide services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired of all ages. The FDBS routinely partners with community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) to provide services that enhance the lives of people with vision loss. The extents of services provided through the CRPs are based, in part, on the types of services available through a specific CRP, the needs of the specific community, and the resources available within the FDBS.

During SFY 2014-2015, FDBS contracted with one community rehabilitation provider, the Conklin Center for the Blind, to provide Supported Employment services. In planning for changes related to Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), FDBS developed a tracking system to ensure that funds were spent as it relates to Supported Employment (SE) and Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS). The table below depicts the expenditures allocations as follows: Services to all eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities is allocated to half (50%) of the PETS expenditures (84015). Services to youth with the most significant disabilities between the ages of 14 to 24 (not older than 24) is allocated to half (50%) of the PETS expenditures (84215). A state match of 10% is required for youth with the most significant disabilities (89215).



During SFY 2014-2015, FDBS contracted with one community rehabilitation provider and utilized local level authorizations to provide supported employment services. Details of the spending pattern are depicted below:

**Figure 10.06**  
**Support Employment Spending Patterns**

Community Rehab Provider	Supported Employment Grant (Title VI) (840xx)	Basic Support (820xx)	State Funds (Match) (892xx)	Total
Conklin Center for the Blind	\$119,682	\$1,174,843		\$1,294,525
Authorizations (842xx)	\$10,783			\$10,783
Authorizations (892xx)			\$3,144	\$3,144
Total	\$130,464	\$1,174,843	\$3,144	\$1,308,452

It was estimated the FDBS would serve no less than 106 individuals during the 2014 FFY, with approximately 10 successful closures. In the Supported Employment Programs, FDBS provided services to 99 individuals during the SFY 2014-2015. Of the 99 individuals served, 57 were served by the Conklin Center, with 24 of them coded as Supported Employment, and 8 of them were competitively employed. Furthermore, of the 99 total participants coded as Supported Employment, 42 were served using authorizations of which 11 were coded as supported employment and 7 were closed as competitively employed. Below is the actual breakout:

**Figure 10.07**  
**Individuals Served by Supported Employment Programs**

Community Rehab Provider	Clients Served	Supported Employment Placements	Supported Employment Outcomes
Florida Lions Conklin Center For The Blind	57	24	8
SE Clients Served via Authorization (Case Services)	42	11	7
FY-2014-2015 Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment Services Totals:	99	35	15



For the SFY 2015-2016, FDBS will significantly change the way the Title VI funds are disbursed. Specifically, FDBS will offer supported employment services via case service dollars and via Conklin Center to ensure continued services and that all clients have access to services. Furthermore, in planning for changes related to the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act as it relates to linking dollars spent on Transition and Supported Employment services, FDBS will develop a tracking system to ensure that 50 percent of the Supported Employment funds are being utilized appropriately for Youth with significant disabilities.

#### (o) **State's Strategies**

FDBS plans to utilize and implement the identified strategies listed below to aid in ensuring that blind and visually-impaired Floridians have the tools, support and opportunities to achieve success. These strategies will assist FDBS provide equal access for clients, increase the number of employers hiring clients, generate FDBS program awareness and strengthen our infrastructure. FDBS will continue to implement strategies that foster success for our blind and visually impaired Floridians.

- Expand opportunities for students to receive FDBS services and secure opportunities for students and youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills.
- Ensure that clients participating in training and education programs are benefiting from engagement.
- Expand utilization of online job systems such as the DEO's Web Portal the state/federal Talent Acquisition Portal, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.
- Encourage and Track industry certifications, apprenticeships and post-secondary outcomes.
- Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Residential Rehabilitation Center to better prepare youth and adults who are blind and visually impaired for success in future employment.
- Increase the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.
- Implement a comprehensive communications and outreach plan.
- Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.
- Increase outreach services to under-served and un-served population.
- Expand utilization of online job systems such as the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's Web Portal the state/federal Talent Acquisition Portal, and the Florida Jobs Connection as a means to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.
- Work collaboratively with the one-stop career center to ensure centers meet accessibility needs of clients both in construction (universal design) and equipment.
- Educate the one-stop career center on the importance of centers being located in areas that are easily accessible to public transportation
- Work collaboratively to ensure that disability coordinators are cross trained with core partners processes.
- Partner to communicate, strategize and execute agreed upon methods of meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.



- Identify opportunities to expand services/programs to meet ongoing needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Enter into a local memorandum of understanding with the local board, relating to the operation of the one-stop career center system.
- Participate in the operation of the one-stop career center system consistent with the terms of the memorandum of understanding and legal requirements.
- Provide representation on the state board to the extent provided under WIOA.
- Evaluate and refine state and LWDB makeup to include partners that will lead Florida to a more comprehensive workforce development system. Local boards should reflect representation from all core partners.
- Consideration of career centers employing universal design principles in their operations, including such requirements in a career center credentialing tool. It was also suggested that maintaining the integrity of systems for unique constituent populations would be important to be sure job seekers with disabilities are provided every opportunity to be successful
- Develop and strengthen employer relationships by providing employer training, support, education and resources related to employing individuals with visual impairment and provide support for employers with compliance with Section 503 regulations.
- Increase successful employment outcomes including self-employment outcomes for transition age youth, adults, and seniors receiving services through FDBS
- Contact community organizations and civic groups. Meet with these identified groups on a regular basis to educate and increase their awareness of our agency, services and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Educate employers on hiring persons who are blind and visually impaired in presentations to community organizations and civic groups. Use these opportunities to set up additional events.
- At least a quarterly, employment placement specialists will make presentations to community organizations and civic groups. If possible, engage employers who have secured blind and visually impaired employees to participate in the presentations.
- Annually, each district will hold an annual open house for employers and potential employers. Invite clients who are working and ready to work to attend.
- Each district will nominate at least one employer for the joint agency statewide exemplary employer event in October. The Director will award plaques to those nominated for statewide exemplary employer. This occurred in 2013, 2014 and should become an annual process.



## (p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

### VR Program Goals

The evaluation and reports of progress of the most recently submitted version of section (l), are discussed below. However, FDBS has since modified its state goals and priorities to match the agency's strategic plan to ensure that the goals and strategies are measureable.

**Goal 1.0 Create an environment that provides job opportunities for visually impaired and blind Floridians.**

**Measure:** This goal was measured by the increase in the number of statewide employment activities at the local level.

**Strategy 1.1** Increase successful job outcomes in the BBE Program.

Four years ago it was determined that one of the most important measurements of a successful BBE program would be the percentage of recently licensed vendors staying at their first facility for at least 12 months. This measure would demonstrate that training adequately prepared new licensees to start at a facility and stay for at least 12 months. It was also believed that it would be a good indicator of the individual's perseverance and on-the-job skills development.

As depicted in the table below, this goal was measured by a comparison with previous years in the number of licensed clients who were awarded their first facility, regardless of the year licensed, and remained under contract for a minimum of one year.

**Figure 10.08**  
**Outcomes in BBE Program**

	SFY 2009-10	SFY 2010-11	SFY 2011-12	SFY 2012-13	SFY 2013-14	SFY 2014-15
Number of new clients licensed	15	7	14	15	14	13
Number of clients awarded their 1st facility, regardless of the year licensed.	14	12	9	14	10	10
Number of those which were awarded facilities that were employed in the BBE at least 1 year	8 of 14 (57.14%)	8 of 12 (66.67%)	7 of 9 (77.78%)	13 of 13 (100.00%) <i>one passed away</i>	8 of 10 (80%)	<i>Not available until SFY 2015-16</i>
% of increase from previous year	N/A	9.53%	11.11%	22.22%	(20.00%)	<i>Not available until SFY 2015-16</i>

**Note:** Clients who are licensed are not always awarded their first facility during the same state fiscal year.

**Strategy 1.2** Increase successful job outcomes in the vocational rehabilitation program.

When comparing SFY 2014-2015 to SFY 2013-2014, FDBS increased the number of successful outcomes by nearly 7%, with an additional 48 successful closures. In SFY 2013-2014, FDBS became fully staffed with EPS, which established support for job placement services in each district office by targeting employer needs and matching them with client skill-sets. FDBS offered 2 separate trainings (December 8-10, 2014 and February 25-27, 2015) to EPS staff on the Employment Outcomes Professionals II, a job development and placement model purchased by FDBS.

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

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

During the past year, FDBS and its Employment First Partners addressed many goals, including several recommendations by the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities, to advance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The goals and recommendations achieved include:

- The development and implementation of the Florida "Abilities Work" Web Portal and Help Desk; which was recommended by the Governor's Commission to assist employers in finding candidates with disabilities who are ready and able to work, and to learn about the resources that can support them on the job. FDBS works with the Abilities Work staff to increase employer relationships and placements, such as connecting employers referred by the Abilities Work help desk to our job ready clients.
- The development of a multi-agency, long-term communications plan to help the state promote a consistent message of awareness among employers and encourage them to hire persons with disabilities. This collaborative plan, will further advance employer outreach efforts of the FDBS Employment Placement Specialists in an effort to increase employment opportunities for our clients.
- The formation of three interagency workgroups, including a grassroots group to receive input from stakeholders at the local level, to address the objectives of the Employment First Collaborative Agreement. FDBS is an active partner in these forums and uses the work to support other related collaborative activities, such as the implementation of the U.S. WIOA).
- The creation of an Employment First Florida website, logo, collaborative training toolkit, and promotional video to inform community partners and the public of Florida's efforts to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. FDBS Director, Robert Doyle, participated in the video and highlighted how these collaborative efforts support the employment of individuals with visual disabilities.
- The establishment of four pilot sites in Nassau, Orange, Osceola, and Miami-Dade Counties to help create a similar collaborative framework at the community level, where employment outcomes are achieved. FDBS district offices participated in the pilots along with local partners, such as school districts, service provider organizations, and parents and self-advocates.



FDBS remains engaged in the collaborative work through the Employment First Partnership and are advancing the Division's commitment to improving economic prosperity of Floridians through employment for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

The Abilities Work Help Desk was created to support the Employment First initiative and FDBS began partnering with this resource in July 2014 with the intent of gaining employment referrals from businesses who are interested in hiring individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Additionally, FDBS maintained contact with the National Employment Team (the NET) and its southeast subcommittee to connect with businesses on a national and regional level. FDBS will continue these partnerships into SFY 2015-2016.

In order to improve employment outcomes for the upcoming SFY, FDBS will expand business relationships with employers at the local level to identify and maximize competitive integrated employment opportunities and career exploration opportunities for adults and students; maintain occupied EPS positions; provide ongoing training to employment staff; increase utilization of the Talent Acquisition Portal among job seekers and employers; increase utilization with the Abilities Work Web Portal and Help Desk; develop new vocational training programs at the residential rehabilitation center; continuation of sponsorship of self-employment opportunities; sponsorship of technology training; sponsorship of academic and vocational training; encourage careers in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics to qualified individuals; provide consultation and technical assistance to community partners and employers to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.

FDBS is optimistic that it will continue to improve its employment outcomes during the current SFY. One reason for this optimism is due to a recent undertaking of the Vermont Progressive Employment Model, a pilot project designed to increase employment outcomes for hard to place clients through strong business relationships, and early and multiple work experiences for clients. The duration of the project is from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016, and is being implemented in six districts throughout the state.

FDBS will also continue to implement strategies such as: collaborating with community rehabilitation providers; networking with national employment partners; integrating into the Florida Jobs Connection and/or the national Talent Acquisition Portal; participating in the Employment First Initiative; networking with local level employers, providing ongoing training to our employment staff; developing new vocational training programs at the residential rehabilitation center; collaboratively identifying and training eligible Floridians to manage state-owned BBE Programs, continued sponsoring of appropriate self-employment opportunities; providing technology training; academic and vocational training; and increasing the number of clients with a higher level education; and increasing our outreach to employers to maximize work experience opportunities for clients.

**Division of Blind Services Employer Recognition and Outreach**

During the SFY 2014-2015, the Division of Blind Services (DBS) established employer recognition and outreach teams to develop strategies to attract new businesses that will provide an increased number of employment opportunities to FDBS clients and to strengthen relationships with current or previous employers. In order to have all division program areas represented, all employees had the opportunity to volunteer for team membership. Final team membership consisted of district and state level staff representing field staff, employment placement specialists, administrators and state office staff. The overall effort of the teams is designed to target and improve employment outcomes for blind and visually impaired Floridians.

During a series of meetings members discussed at length and offered suggestions to enhance vocational rehabilitation efforts designed to reach employers within Florida communities. From these meetings recommendations were drafted, refined, and compiled in a final report to present to the division's expanded leadership team.

Initial implementation of the recommendations began during May 2014; a refined data collection instrument was put in place in July 2014. District offices submit monthly reports that were compiled and analyzed by the state office. Based on this analysis, ongoing improvements to enhance district follow-through were recommended.

**Recommended strategies include the following:**

- Contact community organizations and civic groups. Meet with these identified groups on a regular basis to educate and increase their awareness of our agency, our services and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Educate employers on persons who are blind and visually impaired in presentations to community organizations and civic groups. Use these opportunities to set up additional events.
- EPS make presentations to community organizations and civic groups on at least a quarterly basis. If possible, engage an employer who has blind and visually impaired clients to participate in the presentations.
- Each district holds an annual open house for employers and potential employers. Invite clients who are working and ready to work to attend.
- Each district will nominate at least one employer for the joint agency statewide exemplary employer event in October. The Director will award plaques to those nominated for statewide exemplary employer. This occurred in 2013, 2014 and should become an annual process.



**Strategy 1.3** Develop and Implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Rehabilitation Center.

A team was established to identify what vocational training programs could be implemented through the Florida Rehabilitation Center. The team determined that the Pre-Employment Program Model, developed by Dr. Karen Wolffe would best meet the needs of our clients ages 14 to adulthood. The purpose of this program is to increase the number of blind and visually impaired individuals who are preparing to enter into competitive, integrated employment. This is achieved through highly comprehensive and coordinated vocational rehabilitation services provided at the Florida Rehabilitation Center. These services include but are not limited to pre-employment training, career counseling, job readiness training, work experience opportunities, job shadowing, advocacy, self-awareness, and exposure to post employment. The program is unique in its offering of an action plan and follow-up for each client that involves the client, home base counselors and Rehabilitation Center Staff.

A contract was developed to secure Dr. Wolffe as a vendor. During the spring of 2015, Dr. Wolffe conducted an initial assessment and training with center staff. As a result, guidelines were developed, roles and responsibilities were identified and assignments were given. The Pre-Employment Program will be implemented at the Florida Rehabilitation Center in the summer of 2016 and we feel very hopeful that this program will be a contributing factor to our overall employment outcomes.

**Goal 2.0** Create a service delivery system that provides comprehensive services to visually impaired and blind Floridians.

**Measure:** This goal was measured based upon a comparison of the number of clients and their demographics served in the current and previous years.

**Strategy 2.1** Increase the number of individuals receiving services.

There was a decrease of 23 in the number of clients served by FDBS in SFY 2014-2015 (5,225 last year compared to 5,202 this year). This decrease is attributed to improved eligibility assessments conducted upfront, and lack of awareness of services. Hence, FDBS will continue to seek opportunities to increase its outreach efforts to potential clients through better partnerships with medical offices, educational agencies, CareerSource Florida, and other community service providers. Below is the actual break out of the number of clients served relative to service categories and race/ethnicity in FFY 2014-2015.

**Figure 10.09**  
**Clients Served by Service Category**

Service Categories	Clients Served (SFY 2014-2015)
No program (application status)	259
College students	620
None (*regular FDBS- vocational rehabilitation clients)	3820
Supported employment	55
Transition	448
<b>Total</b>	<b>5202</b>



**Figure 10.10**  
**Number of Clients Served in Race Ethnicity Categories**

Race Ethnicity Categories	Clients Served (SFY 2014-2015)
African-American	1,453
Alaskan Native	0
Asian	70
Caucasian	2,500
Hispanic or Latino	877
Multiracial	23
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	13
Not available	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,938</b>

Note: The number of clients served under both the service and race ethnicity categories does not match due to the number of unassigned clients in application status.

**Strategy 2.2** Increase services in unserved and underserved populations.

Based on an analysis of districts' participation in community outreach activities, assertive efforts were made to continue to address the underserved communities. Each district identified the unique underserved populations in their area. Each month, the identified unserved and underserved populations were targeted in order to increase services to these populations. Outreach was conducted in the following areas: community churches, schools, urban leagues, law enforcement agencies, Lions and Rotary Clubs, Career Source Centers, American Red Cross, Children's Home Society, United Way, Immokalee Interagency Council, health and job fairs, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Christian Migrant Association, and a host of employers. The district administrators maintained a district log of activities relating to underserved populations. The log was submitted to the FDBS Client Services Program Administrator, who compiled a statewide quarterly log for statewide analysis and record keeping purposes. The chart below depicts an increase in the number of open clients served in all listed minority background categories.



**Figure 10.11**  
**Change in Number of Clients Served in Minority Groups**

Minority Group	SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015	Difference from previous year
African-American	1,137	1,136	1,453	+317
Hispanic	526	635	877	+242
Asian	44	58	70	+12
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	9	14	13	-1

**Goal 3.0 Create an environment that fosters an exemplary division workforce.**

**Measure:** This goal will be measured by employee satisfaction surveys and staff development training surveys.

**Strategy 3.1 Increase staff development and continuing education.**

Through the use of an in-service training grant, FDBS provided the following training: a) three regional trainings involving case management and role of the counselor, b) technical assistance and continuing education webinar training titled Innovative Strategies for Serving Youth in Transition, c) vocational rehabilitation statewide training involving policy, rehabilitation process and conflict resolution, d) eye medical webinar training, e) technology training, f) new vocational rehabilitation counselor training, g) Rhode Island Quality Assurance Summit, h) new employee training, i) supervisory training, j) Employment Outcomes Professionals II training and; k) Talent Acquisition Portal and Train the Trainer training.



Of the total training provided, three new trainings were offered which included New Counselor Training, Supervisory Training and Innovative Strategies for Serving Youth Transition Training. Below is a listing of training provided for FDBS staff:

**Figure 10.12**  
**FDBS Training Offered FFY 2014-2015**

Date	Training Description
July 2014	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Refresher Training
July 2014	State Rehabilitation Council Training
August 2014	New Employee Training
September 2014	Louisville, KY, National Quality Assurance Summit Quality Assurance Program Administrator and Supervisor of District 3 Satellite and Quality Assurance team member attended. Goal to learn more about quality assurance activities and strategies in other state agencies to enhance FDBS quality assurance activities.
September 2014	Situational Leadership
September 2014	Employment Outcomes Professional (EOP) - Program that teaches the necessary marketing and selling techniques that are essential for job development
October 2014	Assistive Technology Level 2
November 2014	ADA Coordinators Blind Sensitivity Training
November 2014	New Employee Training - Program that gives an overall view of the division and the various phases of FDBS
December 2014	Neglect and Abuse Training
December 2014	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2014	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Neglect and Abuse Training
January 2015	Client Services Site Review
January 2015	VR Counselor Training
February 2015	New Employee Orientation
February 2015	Annual HR Supervisor Meeting



Date	Training Description
February 2015	Florida Contract Management Certification
February 2015	Excel Training
February 2015	Word Style/Mail Merge
February 2015	Excel Training
February 2015	Employment Outcomes Professional:
March 2015	The Indispensable Assistant
March 2015	Communicating with Diplomacy and Tact in the Workplace
March 2015	Active Shooter Training
April 2015	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Training
April 2015	Ethics-Legal Issues in the Workplace Webinar
April 2015	The Impact of Employer Wellness Policies on Employees with Disabilities
May 2015	New Employee Orientation

### Strategy 3.2 Improve Employee Satisfaction.

To address this strategy, the division determined that it would conduct an Employee Satisfaction Survey. Two satisfaction surveys were conducted at our Florida Rehabilitation Center and Talking Book Library in Daytona Beach, Florida. The results are as follows:

#### Rehabilitation Center Employee Satisfaction Survey

In 2014, 26 employees at The Rehabilitation Center completed a satisfaction survey. Over 76 percent of employees surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. This number included over 65 percent of employee who were more satisfied with their jobs compared to a year ago. In response to the question what is the best thing about working with in the Bureau one employee said, “The satisfaction of seeing clients gain confidence and become more independent.” When asked what FDBS could do to enhance their satisfaction as a FDBS employee one employee said “I would like it if the FDBS leaders would visit the center more often and be more involved with the changes of the center.”

**Talking Book Library Employee Satisfaction Survey**

In 2014, 29 employees at the Talking Book Library completed a satisfaction survey. Over 55 percent of employees surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. One employee stated the best part of working at the talking library is “the sense of satisfaction from knowing my being here is making a difference in somebody’s life every day.” In response to the question of what could FDBS do to enhance your satisfaction as FDBS Employee, one employee said, “Managers can increase job satisfaction by not micro-managing their employees. If employees had the freedom to make decisions on their own without feeling that management will question every decision they make, their work performance would be more effective.”

**Goal 4.0 Create a well-managed and accountable organization that ensures high quality.**

**Measure:** This goal will be measured based upon federal and state program and fiscal audit findings.

**Strategy 4.1** Develop and implement a comprehensive quality assurance program in order to foster a decrease in audit findings from the Offices of the Inspector General, Auditor General and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

FDBS developed a quality assurance protocol specific to program services. The protocol activities include desk and district on-site reviews. FDBS Client Services Unit conducted six of the ten district offices via on-site reviews, during which time a sampling of cases were reviewed by the Quality Assurance Team Members. Districts 9 (Ft. Myers & Palmetto), 10 (West Palm Beach), and 11 (Sunrise) were reviewed in SFY 2013-2014. In SFY 2014-2015, District 12 (Miami) was reviewed in August 2014, District 3 (Jacksonville & Gainesville) in November 2014, and District 1 (Pensacola & Panama City) in January 2015.

Additionally, during the reviews, district staff interviews were conducted to obtain input on training needs. Details of the findings from the case reviews and staff interviews were shared with the staff and plans were implemented to address training requests.

As a result of implementing monthly case reviews, on-site reviews and training, the division achieved a compliance rate of 96% exceeding its standard compliance rate of 90%. Furthermore, the average time lapse from application to eligibility determination was 33 days, which was 27 days earlier than the state requirement of 60 days. Also, 93% of eligibility determinations and 95% of the individualized plans for employment were initiated within the federally mandated time required.

During the SFY 2014-2015, 20,290 authorizations were issued. More than 99% of these authorizations prior to service delivery. During the period, 195 authorizations were issued after the fact. An after the fact authorization is defined as an authorization that is approved and issued after the service has been rendered. However, of those 195 authorizations, 67 were issued for services that had actually been approved in advance of the service, but had to be cancelled and re-assign due to a change in code. Hence, only 128 authorizations were issued after services had been provided, which was decrease from last year’s 322.

Beginning with the quarter ending June 30, 2014, FDBS met or exceeded the RSA VR Monitoring Report corrective action plan requirement of achieving a 90% 12-month average compliance rate for documenting that IPE signature dates occur before clients are provided services. As of December 2014, FDBS has achieved a 12-month cumulative average of 95%. The division continues to monitor compliance during quarterly case reviews, and provides vocational rehabilitation staff with continuous feedback and ongoing training.



**Strategy 4.2** Develop strong fiscal policy and procedures that promote responsible stewardship of available resources.

During the SFY 2014-2015, FDBS continued to implement a case service allocation protocol which determines district allocations and ensures dollars are spent appropriately. To address appropriate allocation disbursements FDBS evaluated historical expenditure data including such as number of clients served, services provided, contractual agreements in regions, business enterprise program expenditures self-employment opportunities, and social change.

Specific to the appropriateness of expenditures, FDBS continues to implement a system that gives local district administrators discretion to review and approve expenditures below \$1,500. Expenditures above \$1,500 are reviewed and approved by state office personnel.

### **Supported Employment Goals**

During SFY 2014-2015, FDBS identified and implemented two strategies to provide services to customers with the most severe disabilities and improve supported employment outcomes. This was done through its partnership with community rehabilitation providers.

- Strategy 1: Contract with one community rehabilitation program to provide statewide residential supported employment services.
- Strategy 2: Use case service funding to supplement supported employment activities, especially in areas of the state where there were no contracting agencies.

As noted in section (I), during SFY 2014-2015, FDBS contracted with one community rehabilitation provider and utilized local level authorizations to provide supported employment services. It was estimated the FDBS would serve no less than 106 individuals during the 2014 FFY, with approximately 10 successful closures. In the Supported Employment Programs, FDBS provided services to 99 during the SFY 2014-2015. Of the 99 individuals served, 57 were served by the Conklin Center. Furthermore, of the 99 participants coded as Supported Employment, 15 were closed as competitively employed.

For the SFY 2014-2015, FDBS will significantly change the way it disburses the Title VI funds. Specifically, FDBS will offer supported employment services via case service dollars to ensure that all clients have access to continued services. In an effort to address WIOA changes in the areas of Transition and Supported Employment, FDBS will start tracking the dollars spent to ensure that 50 percent of the Supported Employment funds are being used appropriately to serve youth with significant disabilities.

FDBS is working with Community Rehabilitation Providers serving the blind to ensure that services are available in each district of the state. Where CRPs are unable to serve individuals, FDBS and CRPs will partner to work with other CRPs to ensure that FDBS clients qualifying for Supported Employment services get quality services via multiple agencies.



### Standards and Indicators

Below is a table of Federal Standards and Indicators, and FDBS performance on those standards which were converted to SFY 2014-2015 and SFY 2013-2014 for the sake of Unified/Combined State Planning. A brief discussion of FDBS performance standards and indicators are noted in the tables below.

**Figure 10.01**  
**Performance Standards and Indicators**

Standard	SFY 2014-2015	SFY 2013-2014	Difference	Met
1.1 Number of closed cases with an employment outcome	761	713	48	Met
1.2 Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome	59.27%	50.28%	-15.17%	Not Met
1.3 Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that has a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage	98.29%	99.02%	.74%	Met
1.4 Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that has a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage and have significant disabilities	100%	100%	0%	Met
1.5 Ratio of average state wage to the average wage of closed cases with employment outcome that have wages greater than or equal to minimum wage	0.68%	0.65%	-4.41%	Met
1.6 Difference between the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self-support at application and the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self-support at closure	45.25%	40.93%	-9.55%	Met
2.1 Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate	0.91	0.9	-1.10	Met



FDBS did not meet Standard 1.2. According to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, factors attributing to not meeting the 1.2 standard are as follows:

- State economy
- An increase in the number of applicants
- Changes in the make-up of the agency's caseload
- Counselor/consumer contact
- Appropriateness of employment plans
- Quality of job development

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

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

FDBS believes that it is poised to continue the improvement of employment outcomes for SFY 2015/2016 through the use of employment strategies listed within this document.



### Innovation and Expansion

Innovation and expansion funds were used in FFY 2013-2014 to support FRCB. The following table indicates the expenses for the FRCB meetings that occurred during the FFY 2013-2014 and SFY 2014-2015.

**Figure 10.13**  
**FRCB Meeting Expenses**

Expense Category	October 2013	February 2014	April 2014	June 2014	July 2014	October 2014	February 2015	Total
Council Travel	\$6,454.09	\$6,870.56	\$6,637.75		\$7,653.76	\$9,344.58	\$11,789.18	\$48,789.92
Personal Care Assistants Travel	\$1,000.00	\$821.90	\$2,037.08		\$772.83	\$2,840.51	\$1,859.54	\$9,331.86
Misc. Expenses	\$1,101.00	\$1,876.58	\$2,691.97		\$1,953.38	\$1,300.50	\$3,130.58	\$12,054.01
Client Satisfaction Survey	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$18,975.00	\$0			\$18,975.00
<b>Total</b>								<b>\$89,150.79</b>

Summary of FRCB Accomplishments and Activities for calendar years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015:

- Governor Scott announced three appointments and six reappointments with terms expiring August 31, 2016. Also, announced three appointments and two reappointments January 22, 2015. These terms will expire August 31, 2017.
- Election of officers occurred during the February 2015 quarterly meeting.
- The FRCB attended the Vision Summit on February 7, 2015, held in the Cabinet Room of the State Capitol.
- The FRCB and FDBS presented plaques of appreciation for employing individuals with visual disabilities to the following employers:
  - Walgreen's Distribution Center in October 2014;
  - The Center for the Visually Impaired October 2014;
  - Children's Medical Services, February 2015;
  - Interim Health Care February 2015
  - Tomlinson Adult Learning Center, April 2015;
  - MammaCare Corporation, July 2015;



- The council scheduled four quarterly meetings and held public forums at three meetings.
- The council assigned an ad hoc committee to develop expectations and procedures for the needs assessment.
- The council chair attended the NCSRC meeting and training in Bethesda, Md. in April 2014.
- FRCB continues to contract with the FSU Survey Research Laboratory to conduct the client satisfaction survey. Results of the survey can be found on the FDBS website at <http://dbs.myflorida.com>.

**Quarterly Meeting Agenda Items:**

- Election of new officers–February 2015
- District Administrator’s Report
- Employer Recognition
- Local community rehabilitation program reported at each meeting.
  - Lighthouse of the Blind of the Palm Beaches
  - Lighthouse of the Big Bend
  - Lighthouse of Pinellas
  - Florida Center for the Blind
  - Center for the Visually Impaired
  - Lighthouse Works
- Updates with FSU concerning data on the client satisfaction survey
- Presentations by other state agencies and professionals from the private sector
- Vocational Rehabilitation Goals Update
- Division of Blind Services State Plan Updates
- Needs Assessment Update
- New Committee Appointments
- Deaf Blind Specialist Update
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014
- Updates on Outreach to Underserved/Unserved
- Strategic Plan Discussions

**Agenda Items conducted by FDBS:**

- Director's report (each meeting)
- Report from the local district administrator (each meeting)
- Update on the Blind Services Foundation
- Council reviewed and gave input on the following FDBS policies.
  - Policy 2.10 Self Employment
  - Policy 6.07 Purchase of Access Technology Updated (combines the old 6.07 with policies 6.8 and 6.9 in this one policy)
- FDBS budget report and legislative updates
- Discussion of the state plan for council input
- Discussion of the needs assessment for council input
- Discussion of the strategic plan
- Update on outreach to underserved/unserved
- Discussion of Transportation

The FRCB continues to collaborate closely with the FDBS and plays an active role in marketing FDBS.

**(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services**

FDBS has significantly changed the way Title VI funds are disbursed during SFY 2015-2016. Specifically, FDBS offers supported employment services via one contracted vendor and by issuing authorizations, to ensure continued services for all clients. Furthermore, in planning for changes related to the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act as it relates to linking dollars spent on Transition and Supported Employment services, FDBS will develop a tracking system to ensure that 50 percent of the Supported Employment funds are being utilized appropriately for Youth with significant disabilities.

**Quality**

FDBS is committed to providing quality supported employment (SE) services to people with the most significant disabilities. FDBS supports the individual in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests.

FDBS vocational rehabilitation counselors help individuals pursue the goals detailed in the individualized plan for employment (IPE) by using supported employment resources to the individual's best advantage. VR actively involves clients and families as appropriate in assessment, planning, and decision making throughout the service delivery process. Additionally, FDBS evaluates the effectiveness of its job placement services and makes improvements to them as needed.



Moreover, FDBS provides ongoing training for its staff and assesses policies and processes to ensure efficient services. FDBS has developed a quality assurance team. This team conducts quality assurance reviews consisting of onsite and desk reviews. The focus areas of the reviews include adherence to state policies, compliance of federal regulations, case documentation, IPE signatures, timeliness of certificate of eligibility, activities tied to the IPE, and authorizations approvals. This team stays current on all federal and state regulations and attends the Annual Quality Assurance Summit for ongoing professional staff development.

In the past FDBS has contracted with services providers for extended client services to ensure that ongoing support services as identified on their individualized plan for employment, are available for as long as the client needs them.

### **Scope**

The scope of supported employment services is comprised of an intensive array of services for blind and visually impaired individuals who require complex services. These services are identified under Title 1, the coordination of extended ongoing support services, and the development of natural supports. Currently, FDBS contracts with the Florida Conklin Center for supported employment services. The Conklin Center and FDBS maintain a long standing partnership and are committed to working collaboratively to serve the blind and visually impaired population.

Supported Employment services are individually designed around the needs and desires of the customer and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Initial placement and stabilization in the workplace
- Job Coaching
- Assistive Technology
- Specialized Job Training
- Social Skill Training
- Money Management
- Formal and informal work site related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication)

**Extent**

FDBS will work to expand supported employment services by educating community members, providers, and relevant stakeholders on the availability of services.

The amount of supported employment services provided is determined by the following: a statewide needs assessment; analysis of performance data; and data provided by agency partners (e.g., DCAE, VR, CareerSource Florida network partners, Department of Children and Families, APD, and the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program).

Supported employment services are provided as long as resources are available.

FDBS will continue to work collaboratively with community service providers to provide supported employment services.

**Transition to Extended Services**

Transition occurs a minimum of 90 days after “stabilization.” Responsibility for funding ongoing support services comes from community service providers.

A successful supported employment outcome closure for a person successfully rehabilitated, occurs when the following criteria are met: (a) 90 days following stabilization and 60 days from transition to closure (to assure ongoing supports are successful following transition); or (b) a minimum of 150 days of continuous employment following stabilization.



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

#### CERTIFICATIONS

##### States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1.	The Florida Department of Education is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, <sup>1</sup> and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act <sup>2</sup> ;
2.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Florida Department of Education <sup>3</sup> agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>4</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations <sup>5</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>6</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations <sup>7</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4.	The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

<sup>1</sup> Public Law 113-128.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>5</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

<sup>6</sup> No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>7</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.



5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The Commissioner of Education has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The Commissioner of Education has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Commissioner Pam Stewart

DATE: 12/22/15

**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 of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), 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 provide assurances that:**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | <b>Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:</b> 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. | <b>Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:</b> 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 plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3.	<p><b>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:</b> The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(b) the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> (A) is an independent State commission.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>(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. the non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60.</li> <li>(d) 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. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No)</li> <li>(e) the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No)</li> <li>(f) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.</li> <li>(g) the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(h) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(i) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(j) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress</li> </ul>



	<p>reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(k) 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.</p> <p>(l) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
4.	<p><b>Administration of the Provision of VR Services:</b> The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <p>(a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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 .</p> <p>(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 in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes/<input type="checkbox"/> No)</p> <p>(d) comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and.</p> <p>(e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act .</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, 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, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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</p>
5.	<p><b>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:</b></p> <p>(a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion</p>



	<p>of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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.</p>
6.	<p>(a) <b>Financial Administration:</b> 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)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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.</p>
7.	<p>(a) <b>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</b> The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>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)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> </ol>



## CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

### CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Applicants must review the requirements for certification regarding lobbying included in the regulations cited below before completing this form. Applicants must sign this form to comply with the certification requirements under 34 CFR Part 82, "New Restrictions on Lobbying." This certification is a material representation of fact upon which the Department of Education relies when it makes a grant or enters into a cooperative agreement.

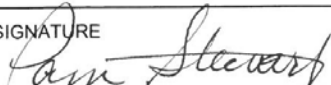
As required by Section 1352, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 82, for persons entering into a Federal contract, grant or cooperative agreement over \$100,000, as defined at 34 CFR Part 82, Sections 82.105 and 82.110, the applicant certifies that:

(a) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal grant or cooperative agreement;

(b) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal grant or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form - LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions;

(c) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subgrants and contracts under grants and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certification.

NAME OF APPLICANT Florida Department of Education Florida Division of Blind Services	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME H126A160087/Basic Vocational Rehabilitation Program
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education	
SIGNATURE 	DATE 12/7/15

ED 80-0013

06/04

