(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council. All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council’s report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council’s functions;

2. The Designated State unit’s response to the Council’s input and recommendations; and

3. The designated State unit’s explanations for rejecting any of the Council’s input or recommendations.

Comment: A couple of Council members noted that they thought there would be more about Pre-employment transition services within the state plan, and that transition would be a bigger emphasis within the plan.

Response: The overall goals within transition, working with students and youth with disabilities remain an emphasis within WIOA. The agency is working with many new strategies to increase the college and career readiness of our student customers. The agencies transition unit staff is working to increase all outcomes in this area.

Comment: One Council member asked if this plan reflected the Agency’s new strategies and tactics under the new WIOA law. It was noted by a couple of members that they did not see a plan for the 4 years going forward.

Response: The four year plan of strategies and collaborative solutions will develop from the overall states’ strategic goals as outline by our SWIB. NHVR will be a partner in successful strategies to meet the needs of our students and adults with disabilities.

Comment: One Council member asked about the sections relating to relationships with employers noting that this always has been a key component of the Agency’s work. They specifically asked does the Agency want to include credit for what the Counselors/Agency is already doing; b) what plans are currently being made; and c) what are the areas that will need adjusting? Also it was suggested that the Agency consider including information about work and training that counselors have done, e.g., taken advantage of the ACRE training.

Response: The work that already occurs within the agency relative to business relationships is significant. Many of the future strategies include the Neoserra system (to be expanded and utilized by the IBT), the utilization of the Talent Acquisition Portal (national database of business opportunities and customers with talent to each opportunity), expansion of agency business engagement team members to serve more areas of the state and other collaborative approaches.
Comment: Once Council member recommended that the Agency review the information on the SRC/SILC. Is this current information? One example referenced was page 171 of the draft – these sections talk about monthly newsletter/resources. The person who was doing this left position in April/May and it remains vacant. This is not currently happening. The Council member recommended that the Agency review section for accuracy

Response: The agency has reviewed and amended outdated language.

Comment: Council members did not feel that the draft information responded clearly to that section under Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds and asked for further clarification on how the Agency was responding to areas (2) (A) and (2)(B).

Response: The agency will seek clarification from RSA and will incorporate final regulatory language into agency policy and state rules.

There were no additional recommendations to the Agency provided in the State Rehabilitation Council’s Annual Report.

The annual assessment of customer satisfaction was completed by RKM Research and Communications, Inc. on behalf of the Agency and the SRC. A total of 440 surveys were completed as part of this endeavor. The average American Customer Satisfaction Index Score (ACSI) among all VR customers surveyed was 78. Results were provided by RKM Research and Communications to the SRC with opportunity for question and comment. No recommendations from the Council were made as a result of this opportunity.

(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness. When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

3. requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

(c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System. Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
The Agency continually seeks to build and maintain relationships with other agencies and organizations that would impact on the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities.

Since the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) ended in early 2012 the agency and community partners working together on the MIG have continued a close relationship. The six Project SEARCH sites in NH are thriving and we have been receiving national technical assistance from the National Project SEARCH out of Cincinnati on a quarterly basis. The entities that have supported and managed the ACES program are continuing with more cohorts each year. The Earn and Learn program with Granite State Independent Living continues with new students each semester and the local school district now pays two-thirds the cost of the program. The sustainability of the programs built by the MIG and VR ARRA funding has been very successful with all the partners collaborating and working to meet the intent of the infrastructure and assist our mutual customers in achieving employment success.

Because of the development of strong relationships with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the implementation of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, the Agency has continued to be substantively involved with HHS as it continues the implementation of NH’s Care Management System which was created by legislative action in 2011. The Agency is an active participant in several work groups facilitated by the Department’s Bureau of Developmental Services which are working to develop a guidance document for the Department specifically related to integrated employment for this population and the issues that must be addressed by the Care Management provider network.

The Agency serves on the Department’s Care Management Oversight Committee.

The Department created a Task Force to work with it on the implementation of a Federal state Innovation Model (SIM) Plan grant, even before the February 2013 notification by Washington that NH was one of 16 states to receive funding for the SIM. The Agency has been an active participant in this Task Force prior to the SIM. The Agency is represented on several Task Force work groups as well as its Steering Committee. It is anticipated that the implementation plan for aligning consumer access across the delivery system silos will create a system with improved coordination of outcome-based services for individuals with disabilities that are in need of, or at risk of needing long-term support services.

The Agency continues to partner with the Bureau of Behavioral Health within HHS to insure that as it begins to identify how it will provide services in a Care Management System that employment continues to be an outcome that is valued and necessary.

The Agency is a member of the Long Term Care Oversight Committee convened by the House Committee on HHS, chaired by the Vice Chair of the Committee, Laurie Harding. This
Committee is currently working to obtain information from the NH Department of Health and Human Services on the states' participation in the ACA Medicaid Expansion Program and the implications for VR Services. Our SRC will be adding an ad hoc committee to understand how care management will affect the services NHVR provides to our customers.

The Agency continues to be actively involved with its partners at HHS in the collaboration to develop consistent standards and training for job developers through ACRE training and APSE certification. To date 11 ACRE classes have been held with approximately 242 individuals completing the training.

In June 2007, the NH Legislature passed a law establishing a Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders. This Commission was charged with examining and making recommendations regarding the needs of children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The VR Field Service Administrator was asked to serve on this Commission and participated in the completion of the 2008 Commission report. As a result of this effort, a Council on ASD was established with appointed membership from the Governor which includes the Commissioner of Education and the Director of NH Vocational Rehabilitation. Contact with the administrative staff of the Council confirms that the work plan of this group clearly defines the recommendations and priorities for NHVR in terms of serving this population. This includes efforts to engage the business community to ensure that individuals on the spectrum are prepared to meet NH’s workforce needs; work to develop innovative supported employment initiatives, access to all levels of training and opportunities for community inclusion and independent living. The Agency is encouraged to work with all partner agencies and entities that also impact on the lives of these individuals and whose collaboration with NHVR is essential to maximizing the services to and success of individuals who experience ASD. In 2011 the agency began developing a comprehensive approach to serving our customers with ASD. Two VR staff attended the National Autism Conference and they have been developing a system to address the rehabilitation needs of customers with ASD. Since the agency began developing a comprehensive approach we have worked with several vendors on pilots to assist this population. The primary services that were provided were coaching and personalized services. The agency is still examining whether these pilots are being more successful with our customers.

In May 2012 New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation was recognized by Business New Hampshire Magazine and the NH Association of Chambers of Commerce as the "2012 Business Assistance Organization of the Year." This was a great honor for the agency. Through the nomination process the agency was able to highlight the extensive number of employers the agency works with to achieve successful employment opportunities for customers with disabilities.

NHVR collaborates with Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (NDHHS) and other partners in the deaf community so that there is a team approach when placement of a customer is made. All parties having the same and updated information allow the customer
and the team to have more success in obtaining job retention. It also allows for any communication issues that could be occurring in the team, so that the customer has the best chance of success. In 2011, NDHHS sought the participation of NHVR in a project that was facilitated by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) to review the NASDSE Guidelines for the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, and to then utilize those Guidelines in the development of NH specific Guidelines which would serve as best practice for school districts in NH. The year-long project has resulted in the New Hampshire Educational Service Guidelines for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which will be presented to the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Directors in April 2012, for use in the development of 2012-2013 Individual Education Programs.

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation and the Manchester Veterans Administration (VA) Regional Office, VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E) are continuing to work together and have revised referral and service delivery process. By working together, NHVR and VR&E counselors are continuing to focus on identifying opportunities to assist the veteran by combining resources whenever necessary, leveraging our business contacts and orchestrating blended funding options to help our wounded warriors’ efforts to reenter the work force. Additional work to assist veterans in the State includes work with the White River Junction Veterans Administration and with the Commission on PTSD and TBI mentioned below. Because of this effort, Jim Hinson, Statewide Program Coordinator - Corporate Relations - and designated Wounded Warrior Management Liaison was recognized in May 2011 by the NH Small Business Administration for being the 2011 NH Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year.

In addition, representatives from NH Employment Security, NH Department of Health and Human Services, NH Vocational Rehabilitation, Manchester VA Regional Office, VA Medical Center, US Department of Labor, Easter Seals, and the NH National Guard are continuing to work together to address the emergent needs of Service Members and families affected by deployment. Towards the end of 2011 John Lynch, Governor State of New Hampshire, appointed members of this group, the Commission on PTSD and TBI - SB 102, to study the effects of service-connected post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury suffered in the line of duty by members of the armed forces and veterans. The Commission on PTSD and TBI will survey NH veterans and make recommendations on any gaps in services. This is the link to the most recent report: NH Veterans Report.

The USDA Rural Development office in New Hampshire does not administer any workforce development or economic development programs that would assist individuals with employment or small business startup assistance. New Hampshire does not have a state use contracting program.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials. Describe:

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

(2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

(A) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

(B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

(C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

(D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Organized within the New Hampshire Department of Education, NHVR participates in the State’s transition initiatives. NHVR counselors across the state are involved in the local and regional partnerships which were developed to implement the activities of grants available. Counselors advocate for the inclusion of students with disabilities and special education staff in the systemic changes occurring in the schools.

NHVR understands the need for services to be identified and in place prior to a student leaving the school setting in order to assist the student with a smooth transition to post-school activities which may include postsecondary education, training, employment, and related vocational rehabilitation services which will lead to competitive integrated employment. To assure this planning, the Agency provides for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment while the student is in school and within 90 days of eligibility determination.

The Agency continues to participate in an interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to transition planning. The current agreement includes information regarding roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services. It is anticipated that this interagency agreement will undergo significant revision as a result of WIOA. This collaboration and coordination is underway and expected to be completed by Spring 2016.

Within the Department’s Dropout Plan, NHVR works with its partners via the Earn and Learn Program to help identify and assist youth with disabilities who may be at high risk of or who have already dropped out of school to remain in or return to school and continue
with the transition process. This transition process might lead them to a post-secondary training institution or other training opportunity.

Bureau staff continue to participate on the “Next Steps New Hampshire” leadership team. This team is managing the state’s Special Education Development Grant and works with various regional partners to improve secondary transition services to students with disabilities.

NHVR continues to be an active leader in the state Community of Practice on Transition (CoP). Using its strategy, it is intended to promote and to influence transition practice and policy on multiple levels, using more of a grassroots type of approach. The CoP sponsors an annual Transition Summit, and is currently focusing its efforts on serving as advisory board for NSNH, increasing student and family voice, and promoting and sharing the use of successful transition practices and resources. The Agency continues to be involved in the provision of sector-based employment opportunities through Project SEARCH and Project INCOME. These focus on the healthcare administrative support respectively. To date, NHVR has supported 271 students through Project SEARCH and 29 through Project Income in an effort to reach their employment goal.

NHVR continues to employ a full-time Transition coordinator and has hired a full time Administrator for Transitioning Youth Services to work statewide to improve services to students and youth with disabilities. The Administrator and Coordinator are working closely together to ensure that changes implemented by WIOA are achieved. The activities these positions cover include:

- working with NHVR counselors to improve access and services provided to students and youth with disabilities;
- working with NHVR counselors to develop best practices and examples of best practices to students and youth with disabilities;
- providing training on activities occurring across the state as a result of implementation of WIOA;
- coordinating efforts with NHVR counselors, school district staff, school-to-work staff and other constituents, to ensure the inclusion of students and youth with disabilities in the systemic changes occurring in the schools as a result of the IDEA 2004 and the Rehabilitation Act;
- providing advocacy for students and youth with disabilities to a variety of constituents;
- improving connections between NHVR and other transition service agencies;
- providing information and guidance regarding Labor Laws as they relate to job shadow, internships and work experience for students and youth with disabilities;
- marketing to school staff, students and families, adult service agencies, etc. in a variety of areas, e.g., employment issues as a result of disability, transition of students with disabilities, availability of adult services, best practices in transition of youth with disabilities, accessing adult services, employer perspectives; develop
relationships with other agencies providing services to students and youth with disabilities to maximize services offered;

- providing technical assistance on grants as they are developed with multiple agencies and programs to ensure the inclusion of all students and youth with disabilities.
- providing continued support of transition programs for students and youth such as the Earn and Learn program, Project INCOME and Project SEARCH

The NHVR staff actively facilitates meetings with school staff, NHVR counselors and school-to-work staff to plan the inclusion of students with disabilities in the systemic changes occurring within the state.

The Agency will continue to expand and solidify its interagency approach to ensuring a successful transition from school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities for students with disabilities throughout the State. On both the statewide and local level, VR Agency staff continues to participate in planning, program development and funding of transition from school to work or post-secondary education initiatives with other agencies and school districts. The Agency continues to work closely with local school districts to develop, implement and expand programs designed to facilitate the transition process. As we move forward with the implementation of WIOA, all NHVR counselors will have a portion of their total caseload dedicated to serving the transition population. This allows the Agency to better respond to the needs of students with disabilities who are transitioning to the workforce or post-secondary education, work on strengthening existing school district relationships, and develop new school district relationships. Efforts in transition will take on a new focus given the implementation of WIOA. Per the newly reauthorized Act, Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) will be provided on two distinct levels, generalized and individualized. We are proposing a model, based on a reasonable interpretation of the law that the generalized PETS will be provided to those who are deemed potentially eligible for VR services per WIOA. Conversely, the individualized PETS will be provided to those who have been deemed eligible for VR services per WIOA. Via the RFP process, NHVR has requested regional consortium responses that will outline the provision of all generalized PETS on a statewide level.

Over 1500 individuals on the Agency’s current caseload are under the age of 21. And each year the Agency receives over 700 referrals per year of individuals who are under the age of 21. Students served by the Agency represent all disability groups and not just those in special education programs. Counselors are frequently present in schools receiving referrals from teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. Serving this population will remain a focus activity of the Agency.

The Agency plans to include statewide training and technical assistance intervention for schools and families for developing natural supports, which is a school and work based learning model including job training, monitoring and general workplace competencies in its continued innovation and expansion activities.
The Agency continues to collaborate with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities to support area agencies in the provision of the sector based training fund. The State Rule governs how individuals with developmental disabilities will achieve long-term support funding. The rule will ensure that if someone is in an employment setting they will have the long-term supports to maintain that job. It also supports that students still in high school can achieve long-term supports while still in school and prior to graduation. The rule also helps families understand that employment should be the first option when looking at goals after high school graduation.

(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations. Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit VR service providers.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation works with Community Rehabilitation Program providers (CRPs) to provide job search and placement services. The current menu of services and component pricing does not differentiate between profit and nonprofit agencies and is standard for all CRPs. The agency has completed systemic changes for the type and provision of services, training/competency and outcomes that are related to Community Rehabilitation Program providers. NHVR has collaborated with other partners to achieve a statewide accepted competency model that utilizes shared resources and will create consistency in how multiple systems utilize vendors that may provide services to customers in a variety of settings.

The process to determine the need for new, improved or expanded programs will be accomplished through:

1) public forums in seven regions to include customers of Vocational Rehabilitation, Vocational Rehabilitation staff, community rehabilitation programs staff, developmental services area agency staff, mental health center staff, and the general public;
2) meetings of Vocational Rehabilitation administrators and consultants;
3) meetings of the State Rehabilitation Council; and
4) consultation with the State Board of Education.

Through continuing statewide studies on the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, the Agency gathers data and utilizes this to identify ways in which the overall effectiveness of community rehabilitation program services might be improved. The agencies new case management system also has a “vendor report card” that will allow us to analyze and make recommendations on services and efficiencies in the system.

The Agency will continue to seek ways to identify and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in New Hampshire including, where appropriate, provision of services to groups of individuals with disabilities through the establishment, development and improvement of collaboration with private vocational rehabilitation service providers including community rehabilitation programs.
In an effort to standardize services in the field, all CRP’s will be required to complete ACRE training, prior to receiving referrals from NHVR, in order to meet the minimum requirements to work with people with disabilities. All CRP’s looking to receive Supported Employment referrals, are encouraged to pursue and/or obtain the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credential, in order to demonstrate a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to prove integrated employment supports to a variety of people with disabilities. In addition, the CRP Management Liaison will review their resume and qualifications to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to work with our customers. Once a CRP is approved by the CRP Management Liaison, the CRP will be placed in NHVR’s “Customer Guide to Job Development Services” and scheduled to attend training on NHVR’s job placement and referral process.

Additional OJT will be offered by VR counselors and Rehabilitation Technicians to ensure the CRP understands NHVR’s referral and invoice process.

CRP’s are required to meet with the Regional Offices, at least once a year, to review progress being made with each of their customers. At this meeting, CRP’s will ensure their records match with the local Regional Offices. In addition, they will review NHVR’s “Customer Guide to Job Development Services” to ensure we have their updated contact information and document any additional training.

NHVR’s case management system, AWARE, has the capacity to evaluate vendor success rate and report card information that documents the number of referrals for individual services, referrals for job placement, and successful placement outcomes.

(f) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services. Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Agency has developed relationships with both the Bureau of Developmental Services and the Bureau of Behavioral Health within our Department of Health and Human Services in the State of NH. The relationships are designed to enhance the collaboration of rehabilitation, case management and vocational service provider personnel with eligible individuals and their families regarding the implementation and continuation of individualized supported employment.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation shall continue to provide training and technical assistance according to identified need with existing resources, including the development of new strategies and the refinement of existing structures to encourage full integration. A revised Memorandum of Agreement with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and the Bureau of Behavioral Health is planned for Spring of 2016.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities to be served under this program will likely have developmental disabilities, acquired brain disorders and/or mental health diagnoses,
since these are the groups for which funding is available for long-term support after Vocational Rehabilitation services are completed. In addition, the Agency will seek additional avenues to expand the availability of supported employment services, including ongoing support services provided through natural community-based supports by families, employers, life insurance carriers and community organizations, for individuals with acquired brain injuries, significant physical disabilities, and other disabling conditions. The Agency will continue to collaborate with the two bureaus regarding any necessary system changes that will encourage and facilitate natural supports.

As mentioned in a previous section, the Bureau of Developmental Services has enhanced their employment long-term supports for joint customers. In addition, the Bureau has also added in employment goals to the contracts of the 10 area agencies. These changes are monumental changes.

The agency has also added in a new supported employment service called “situational assessment.” The situational assessment is a specialized service that provides a VR participant with the opportunity to demonstrate their work skills at a real and functioning worksite (unpaid) within the community. This service will allow this agency to evaluate and identify the necessary services a participant will need to be successful in an actual competitive employment situation, on a short term basis and in accordance with DOL guidelines. The agency has lined up the insurance component of this service and has had a small team of VR staff that has worked on this diligently. Select vendors at each of the regional offices, will be able to provide this service. These vendors will be selected based on their’ demonstrated abilities to complete this assessment.

\[g\] Coordination with Employers. \emph{Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:}

\begin{itemize}
  \item [(1)] VR services; and
  \item [(2)] transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.
\end{itemize}

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation has had a long history of serving dual customers: individuals with disabilities and business partners. In the last ten years the agency has enhanced this principle and has worked on various levels in the organization to accomplish success for both customers. The agency revamped the Community Rehabilitation Program Menu of Services in 2010 and will be doing so again with the reauthorization of the WIOA. Meetings have already begun to occur to examine the services provided and how they assist the agency in reaching our new common performance accountabilities.

The agency has been coordinating, along with partners, the Employment Leadership Awards in NH for seven years. This event began with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funding and has evolved over the last seven years to examine and recognize business partners that hire, train and retain talent in their organizations. The hiring of individuals
with disabilities into these companies has been shown to enrich work culture and assist business partners in lowering turnover rates and improve organizational success.

In the coming years the agency will be working with the Institute on Community Inclusion out of UMass Boston. In this relationship they will provide us with intensive technical assistance to enhance internal agency capacity for business engagement strategies. We will be working to complete a menu of services for business services in this project in addition to increasing business engagement staff in each regional office. Business Relations staff will work with students and adults with disabilities.

The agency is working closely with our national and state partners to utilize data systems and ELMI strategies to ensure we are meeting business needs and assisting our customers in achieving their personal vocational goals. The National Employment Team and the Talent Acquisition Portal are two national strategies to engage businesses and assist them in hiring individuals with disabilities. They are both programs employed by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

(h) Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;

The agency will seek to develop and enact a Memorandum of Understanding with this entity during the calendar year 2016.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation has, in the past, developed and engaged in discussions to complete a Memorandum of Understanding with both the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and the Bureau of Behavioral Health. With the finalization of federal regulations expected to be completed in Spring 2016, the agency will work to complete an updated MOU with these entities during the calendar year 2016. The MOU will help to identify referral and service provision agreements as well as supported employment strategies and services to increase the successful competitive, integrated employment outcomes for the mutual customers of each system.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development. Describe the designated State agency’s procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development
(A) Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

(i) the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(ii) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

(iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

The Agency has implemented a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) which identifies procedures and activities designed to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified professionals for the Agency. The CSPD plan has been amended with input from members of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The full Council had the opportunity to review and comment on the CSPD plan, the development of the plan and related policies and procedures. Included in this plan are the following requirements:

- Data system on personnel and personnel development
- Plan for recruitment and retention of qualified personnel
- Personnel Standards
- Staff development
- Personnel to address individual communication needs
- Coordination with personnel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Agency collects and analyzes, on an annual basis, data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development. An annual training needs assessment is completed to identify focus areas for personnel development activities for the upcoming year. Data collected for financial and planning purposes is used for this analysis. This is data that reflects current information regarding personnel who are employed by NHVR. Included within this assessment is a self-assessment of training needs, an update of individual growth plans, and identification of training needs by regional leaders and an evaluation of the statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of persons with significant disabilities.

Over the next five years, the Agency anticipates hiring staff to fill openings created through retirement and other personnel turnover. The Agency realizes the need for continued recruitment and training of qualified personnel. Succession planning is a necessary part of the Agency’s preparation to address projected hiring needs, and is included within the annual analysis of qualified personnel needs and personnel development. The Agency projects that in the next 2-5 years a number of seasoned staff will be leaving their current positions. To help prepare for a projected increase in staff turnover the agency began
working with Casey Hall and Associates to address management/leadership training and planning. Work continues with one of these consultants through FY 16 and into FY 17 with efforts including a focus on leadership, and succession planning.

The Agency has 45 Rehabilitation Counselor positions. At present 27 of the staff holding these positions meet the standard; fifteen caseload carrying counselors do not meet the standard; and there are three vacancies. Current data indicates that the ratio of Rehabilitation Counselor to customers served is 144 customers to each Counselor. This information is reviewed quarterly by the Agency and the Policy committee of the State Rehabilitation Council. The Agency regularly reviews staffing patterns and caseload size to determine coverage needs. Although not optimal, the Agency believes that, at this time the current staffing is adequate to meet the needs of the Agency’s customers. Over the next five years the Agency projects a relatively stable staffing pattern. However, data indicates that there is an existing population of students with disabilities transitioning from school to post-secondary activities, including work that would require additional staff to adequately serve. These requirements will also be continually reviewed and adapted to meet any changing needs.

In addition the Agency also has four non-caseload carrying Counselor positions; two Counselor positions specifically designated to assist customers with benefit planning; and two of the current Counselor positions are being designated to target placement activities within the Agency.

During FY 15, one Rehabilitation Counselor resigned their position with the agency and one counselor left the agency for other reasons. This is within the average of two to five position vacancies the Agency has experienced in the past few years. This represented a 5 percent turnover rate for Rehabilitation Counselors in the Agency.

Staff projections for the next five years:

Evaluating the past and current numbers of individuals served by the Agency reveals a stable pattern with moderate projections for any increases in these numbers served by the Agency over the upcoming five-year period. Based on these stable numbers of individuals served by the program, the current staffing pattern is projected to be adequate in serving the individuals who apply for vocational rehabilitation services in NH over the next five-year period.

During FY 15 there was no turnover of vocational evaluation staff. One supervisory staff person was hired in 2015. One support staff was promoted to an administrative staff position and one administrator position was hired during the year. Support staff saw the most turnover in the agency as two individuals resigned, three retired; two were promoted within the agency; and one full and one part-time support level staff left for other reasons. It is anticipated that the turnover pattern may increase slightly over the next five-year period from the fairly stable staffing pattern the Agency has seen in the past five years. Over the upcoming five-year period staff leaving the agency through retirement and
attrition are anticipated to be 2-3 administrative staff persons, 10-15 rehabilitation counselors, 1-2 supervisory staff, 1 vocational evaluator staff and 5-10 support staff.

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(B) Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

(i) a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

(ii) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

(iii) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

While there are no educational institutions in New Hampshire that offer graduate studies in rehabilitation counseling, there are several colleges and universities in the region that offer a Master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling, including:

Assumption College has 103 full and part-time matriculated students currently enrolled in their Rehabilitation Counseling programs including the 30 who will graduate in May. Assumption had 41 students graduate with Master’s of Arts degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling in the previous year. Although there is not any current RSA grant or scholarship funding to students attending Assumption College, the college notes that a few current students have received RSA traineeships in the past. The Agency had two staff enrolled in the Assumption College program who were not able to continue when the RSA grant was discontinued.

Central Connecticut State University has 92 students currently enrolled in their Counselor Education with Specialization in Professional and Rehabilitation Counseling Master’s in Science program. They report graduating an average of 15 students each year.
Salve Regina University currently has 68 students enrolled in their Master’s Degree program. Twenty-three of these students have received RSA funding. Twelve students are anticipated to graduate in May while 14 students graduated in May. The school has RSA long-term training funding and has some opportunities for distance education.

The University of Southern Maine offers a Master’s of Science in Counseling with a specialty in Rehabilitation Counseling. There are 27 students currently in the master’s RC program. None of the students currently receive RSA funding. Three students completed the program and graduated; five students are expected to graduate the program in the Spring.

In addition to regional programs, Agency staff has been able to take advantage of distance learning opportunities from institutions in other states to attain their Master’s degrees. In FY 2014 and 2015 two NHVR staff completed their master's degree from Southern University in Louisiana; one staff person completed classes to meet the CSPD requirements from University of Utah’s distance program; and one additional staff completed coursework to meet the CSPD requirements through Plymouth State University. The Agency currently has staff who are working toward Master’s degrees from George Washington University and the University of Massachusetts – Boston.

All rehabilitation counseling graduates from the colleges listed will be eligible for Certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC).

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Students enrolled</th>
<th>Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA</th>
<th>Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA</th>
<th>Graduates from the previous year</th>
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<td>University of Southern Maine</td>
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</table>

(2) 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 including, 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.

Data received through the annual assessment of training needs is used for the development and implementation of the Agency’s in-service training plan and staff development
activities. The results are also shared with supervisors and administrators and utilized in the updating and implementation of professional growth plans.

The identified training needs are utilized in the planning and development of training.

Staff also are encouraged to participate in professional development training. Three NHVR staff members are currently enrolled in the state level Public Supervisor training. Two staff are enrolled in the national rehabilitation leadership training program.

Further activities toward recruitment and retention of qualified personnel, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities, are identified within the Personnel Standards and Staff Development sections below.

In addition to the communication and recruitment efforts with the colleges and universities in the region, NHVR uses the Recruitment Center for State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (www.rehabjobs.info) in recruitment efforts.

(3) Personnel Standards. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

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

(B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

NHVR recognizes that the requirements of the CSPD provide an opportunity to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of rehabilitation counselors, thereby enhancing the provision of services and the quality of employment outcomes. In accordance with 34 CFR 361.18 (c)(2)(i), NHVR has established the following personnel standard:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling; or
2. Master's in Counseling* and 4 core courses
   a. One course on Assessment
   b. One course on Occupational Information or Job Placement
   c. One course on Medical or Psychosocial and Cultural Aspects of Disabilities
   d. One course on Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services

* The Master’s degree must be in the field of counseling. Examples of degrees that may be considered as a Master’s in counseling or as counseling-related may include, but are not necessarily limited to, degrees in rehabilitation, special education, social work, and psychology. If your degree is in a counseling discipline other than rehabilitation counseling, a course on the Theories and Techniques of Counseling, as defined by CRCC, must be part of
the degree requirements. Other required courses may be taken as part of or in addition to the original Master's degree.

Or

3. Master's, Specialist or Doctoral degree in one of 13 qualifying majors (listed below) granted by a college or university accredited by CHEA - PLUS a post-graduate advanced certificate or degree that includes a minimum of 18 semester hours or 27 quarter hours granted by a college or university that also offers a CORE-accredited Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Six graduate courses (one each on Theories and Techniques of Counseling; Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling; Assessment; Occupational Information or Job Placement; Medical or Psychosocial and Cultural Aspects of Disabilities, and; Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.)

Acceptable Master’s, Specialist or Doctoral Degree Majors:

- Behavioral Health Psychology
- Behavioral Science Psychometrics
- Disability Studies Rehabilitation
- Human Relations Social Work
- Human Services Special Education
- Marriage and Family Therapy Vocational Assessment/Evaluation
- Occupational Therapy

Priority will be given to a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling both in new hires and in support of training to assist staff to achieve the standard.

Outreach efforts will be targeted toward individuals who meet the personnel standards and who are from minority backgrounds or are individuals with disabilities. Recruitment efforts will be coordinated with disability groups and associations serving minority populations, through contacts and sharing of job opportunities available within the Agency.

While it is the intent of NHVR to hire and retain employees who meet the standard, in some instances we are unable to hire professional staff who meet these standards. Factors which impact on the hiring of staff in NH who meet the personnel standard include a limited pool of qualified candidates and geographical considerations that result from the rural nature of the state. NHVR has worked to address this issue in a number of ways including working with the NH Division of Personnel to develop the capacity to hire staff at a bachelor degree level who are immediately placed in a training plan to achieve the requirements of the standard. This plan provides for the training necessary to obtain their Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Counseling Master’s that meets the criteria of the standard and outlines the support the Agency will provide to achieve this. In addition, the Agency
continues to seek programs and coursework, including those that utilize long distance technology that will assist Counselors to achieve the standard.

To ameliorate the impact of these factors, NHVR conducts outreach activities to reach potential candidates. NHVR has identified colleges and universities in New England that provide Master's level training in rehabilitation counseling and will continue to work with these institutions toward the recruitment of qualified candidates. NHVR has worked with the University of Hartford and Assumption College to identify and provide needed coursework for staff. The Training Officer continues to seek alternative educational opportunities for staff through emerging long distance learning opportunities, including RSA-funded training opportunities such as the Southern University program in Louisiana.

NHVR supports retraining of new and existing employees through the following plan and policies:

Current employees are eligible for educational assistance to return to graduate level training. Any employee who enrolls in an accredited Master’s program in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Master's in Counseling that meets the standard will be eligible for release time.

All staff will be encouraged to continue to update and maintain their skills by completing 100 hours of in-service training every five years. The Training Officer will maintain current records of the training offered and credit hours earned. The In-Service Training Project (ISTP) provides training that is available and accessible to all NHVR personnel.

The Training Officer maintains records that track progress in meeting the personnel standard for all rehabilitation counseling staff. These records will include education level, completion of core courses, continuing education credits obtained and individual growth plans that outline how individual employees will meet the personnel standard within seven years. Records will be updated regularly and analyzed yearly to assess progress.

NHVR maintains records that identify the degree to which new hires meet the personnel standard. These records will be analyzed on a yearly basis to assess the success of the Agency in obtaining qualified personnel and to identify factors that impede the hiring of staff who meet the standard.

At this time, fifteen Rehabilitation Counseling staff do not meet the personnel standard and are either in a plan to achieve that standard, or have been newly hired and are developing a plan to achieve the standard.

(4) Staff Development. Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

(A) a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training
implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

(B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

The Agency continues to provide staff with appropriate and adequate training. The Agency recognizes the importance of having qualified, professional vocational rehabilitation staff to assist persons with disabilities to locate, train for, engage in and maintain employment. The in-service training project is designed to assure that Agency staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to assist persons with significant disabilities to achieve their employment goals. The activities of the project are targeted to address the needs identified through the training assessment and federal priorities and are evaluated and updated yearly.

Agency training includes a comprehensive orientation for new staff, ongoing training opportunities for existing staff at all levels of the organization, and a system to evaluate effectiveness of the training efforts. Training needs will be met through attending classes, workshops, and seminars in the state. Support staff, as well as counselors and management staff, are encouraged to attend training.

In-service training addresses retention of qualified staff, development of new skills for new staff, leadership development and capacity building. Basic and ongoing training is based on the Agency assisting staff to meet the identified counselor competencies; staff needs assessment, state plan forums and ongoing monitoring. Fiscal year 2016 marks the first year that the Agency will not have targeted grant money for in-service training. During this year the Agency continues to be committed to training for all levels of staff. The Agency will be working with other workforce partners to bring relevant training to staff as well as topics relevant to vocational rehabilitation and placement of persons with disability including trainings that address these subjects such as: developing job opportunities; utilizing assistive technology and modification; maximizing comprehensive assessment; counseling skills; utilization of community resources; working effectively with community rehabilitation programs; disability topics; and case practice.

The Agency seeks to gather and use information obtained through research and collaboration with other agencies to enhance and further develop the skills and capacities of rehabilitation staff.

Job-related workshops and seminars will be sponsored in cooperation with other state agencies with whom the Agency has cooperative working agreements, and by state, regional and national trainers. These activities will coincide with the ongoing development and upgrading of professional growth plans.

(5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to
The Agency has developed strategies to meet (through Agency staff and/or by obtaining the services of others) the individual communication needs of applicants and recipients of services through appropriate modes of communication or in native languages.

The Agency has taken actions to establish and maintain minimum standards to ensure the availability of personnel within the designated state unit who, to the maximum extent feasible, are trained to communicate in the native language or mode of communication of the customer.

The Agency utilizes interpreters to communicate in the native language of applicants and eligible individuals, and is developing procedures to assist counselors to obtain qualified interpreters, including the identification of resources within the state for interpreters, cultural information, and translation services.

The Agency includes on its staff, or arranges to have available to staff, those individuals able to communicate with applicants and eligible individuals who utilize manual communication, and/or tactile, oral and non-verbal communication devices. The Agency maintains a list of state/national certified interpreters for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Agency has the ability to, and will provide large print documents, recorded information, computer disk formats, and assistive listening devices, as appropriate, to the individual.

During the fall of 2012 the Department of Education Special Education, with support of Vocational Rehabilitation received the Special Education Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), now called, “Next Steps NH.” Through this five-year grant opportunity the programs will jointly train and assimilate knowledge into the local school districts both programs interact with in providing services. VR Counselors and Special Education staff will collaborate and join forces to provide services in an aligned fashion.

The goal of the five-year $3.8 million grant is to increase the number of students with disabilities and/or at risk of dropping out of school that are college and career ready in NH through the implementation of evidence-based transition practices. Next Steps New Hampshire will use the following strategies to achieve this goal:

- Increase student competency through increased use of Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs)
- Enhance transition planning and increased transition activities and opportunities
- Greater family-school engagement, and
• Sustaining practices through our state Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), regional professional development intermediaries, a transition Community of Practice, and the use of technology

Bureau staff participate on the grant’s leadership team and have worked together with Bureau of Special Education staff to provide the first of what is hoped to be several dual trainings between special education and vocational rehabilitation staff. In January 2013, Bureau of Special Education staff presented the special education process to vocational rehabilitation and Workforce Investment staff. Thirty staff participated.

The agency has state leadership representation on the State Advisory Committee on the Education of Students/Children with Disabilities (SAC). Attending the meetings and understanding the current issues that are affecting our transitioning youth is critical to understanding the needs of the customers we jointly serve.

NHVR staff continue to work with other areas of the department toward coordinating the Agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development efforts with personnel development activities occurring within the NH Department of Education.

(j) Statewide Assessment.

(1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

(A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

(B) who are minorities;

(C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

(D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

(E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and

During the spring of 2016 NHVR will complete specific listening sessions to assess the needs for pre-employment transition services or other transition services in all seven regions of the state.

(3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation conducts regular and ongoing assessments of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant disabilities residing in the state.
The required triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment was completed at the end of FY 2013. Included in the needs assessment is a review of New Hampshire population statistics; NHVR service data; survey data to assess customer satisfaction; survey data to assess the provision of transition services and the needs of transition-aged customers; and information received at forums held at strategic locations throughout the State. The full report can be viewed online at: NH Vocational Rehabilitation Report

The data in this section of the plan has been updated to include data available at the time of the FY 16 state plan amendment preparation. This update includes information from 1) seven public forums held throughout the state with the purpose of assessing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant disabilities residing in the state, receiving comments and recommendations to update the rehabilitation and career needs of individuals with significant disabilities residing in the state and the need for supported employment services; 2) an online survey that was available during the public comment period that allowed individuals who were unable to attend a forum (or chose not to attend) to provide input and recommendations; 3) review of demographic data and, 4) the data from the current customer satisfaction survey and the 2013 comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

The findings continue to support previously identified rehabilitation needs for persons with disability in NH in the following areas of:

- Awareness
- Education
- Outreach
- Access
- Collaboration
- Transition
- Housing
- Transportation
- Placement
- Information and Referral / Resources
- Staff Development
- Training

Assessment data was sought from various individuals, groups and agencies including individuals who experienced and/or worked with individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services; individuals with disabilities who are minorities; individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; individuals served through other components of the statewide workforce system; and individuals served through Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).

NHVR worked with the State Rehabilitation Council to complete the required comprehensive statewide needs assessment due to be completed every three years. The
SRC identified two needs areas it believed should be further investigated: services to Veterans and services to individuals with a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse. The SRC presented its analysis of the data relating to services to Veterans and concluded that NHVR continues to work in collaboration with its partners at the VA and other organizations which provide a variety of services to “wounded warriors” and their families. The SRC workgroup investigating individuals with dual diagnosis has developed an action plan that includes some survey methodology to gather additional information about this group. NHVR also sits on the special Task Force created by the Governor to assess and insure that the needs of Veterans and their families are being met by state and local organizations. The next needs assessment is scheduled to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2016. The SRC has begun working on this with the Agency this year and has recommended that transition-aged youth be a focus within the needs assessment.

During the spring of 2016 NHVR will complete specific listening sessions to assess the needs for pre-employment transition services or other transition services in all seven regions of the state. This assessment will include input and participation by our Special Education partners around the state to meet the needs of students.

(k) Annual Estimates. Describe:

(1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.

(2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

   (A) The VR Program;
   (B) The Supported Employment Program; and
   (C) each priority category, if under an order of selection.

(3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

(4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

2010 Census data demonstrates a profile of 850,768 individuals residing in the state between the ages of 18 and 64. Of that total, 76,114 report to having a disability (8.9% of the state’s 18 to 64 population). Information from the 2010 survey regarding the number of these individuals in the workforce was not yet available.

Disability data from the American Community Survey reveals that of the 76,000 individuals identifying themselves with a disability that 46,000 were not employed. This 46,000 represents 60% of the working age adults (ages 18 - 64) with disabilities in the state. In this study the results were further broken down to show that a majority of the individuals in this group do not identify themselves as being in the labor force.

Disability estimates from the 2011 American Community Survey reveal that the percentage of working-age people with disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 10.9% or estimated 5,000 individuals identifying themselves in this group.
The New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau’s October 2013 issue of 'New Hampshire Economic Conditions' noted that, "In New Hampshire, there were 844,500 people in this working age cohort. Almost 80,500 of these were affected by some type of disability or about 9.5 percent of those ages 18 to 64 years." Also noted in the report is that almost 40 percent of those disabled workers, representing 30,500 disabled individuals participated in the state’s workforce in 2012.

During the period of 10/1/15-9/30/16, NH Vocational Rehabilitation anticipates a workload of 8,100 individuals.

Applicants expected on hand October 1, 2015 - 250

Number of Applicants expected during FY 2016- 3,300

Customers in eligible statuses expected on hand 10/1/15 - 5,250

Total eligible individuals expected in FY 2016 - 8,300

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Title I or Title VI</th>
<th>Estimated Funds</th>
<th>Estimated Number to be served</th>
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(l) State Goals and Priorities. The designated State unit must:
The State goals and priorities were jointly developed with NHVR and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Each year the SRC reviews these goals and priorities as part of the state planning process. This year the Agency’s goals have been expanded to further define and demonstrate the priorities and activities of the Agency. These changes were based on the most recent results obtained during the updating of the comprehensive statewide assessment, the federal standards and indicators and on information that the Agency has gathered and used in strategic planning for the Agency.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation’s goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs:

**Goal 1** --- Quality self-determined employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in New Hampshire.

**Goal 2** --- Effective and efficient use of resources

**Goal 3** --- Increase the opportunities for training and college and career readiness for transition-aged youth

**Goal 4** --- Promote an environment that supports the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Customer relationship

**Goal 5** --- Provide ongoing support for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) in order to enhance their ability to achieve their statutorily-created mission

**(m) Order of Selection. Describe:**

1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:
   
   (A) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.
   
   (B) The justification for the order.
   
   (C) The service and outcome goals.
(D) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order; and

(E) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

(2) If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

This agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

(1) Specify the State’s goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

(A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

(B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Approximately 99% of all funds available through Title VI, Part B will be used for services to customers. Individual service authorizations will be used to purchase individual services for eligible individuals; however, services may be contracted to service providers to develop supported employment services for groups not covered under other programs or to develop programs in areas of the state where supported employment services are not readily available.

Of the grant funds received, at least 50 percent will be reserve for the provision of supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities. NH will provide a non-Federal share of 10 percent of these funds which are reserved for the provision of supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities. This is to support the efforts to ensure that youth with significant disabilities are given every opportunity to receive the services necessary to ensure the maximum potential to achieve competitive integrated employment.

The funds will be deployed statewide, as needed, for individuals with disabilities eligible for VI-B funding until exhausted, then supplemented with Title I funds as appropriate. It is planned to rehabilitate 85 persons in supported employment outcomes in fiscal year 2017. The majority of these customers are expected to be individuals with developmental disabilities and/or mental illness as these are the disabilities for which funding is available for long-term supports after vocational rehabilitation services are completed.

The Agency will continue to seek alternative sources for long-term supports, including the use of natural supports, as appropriate, to the individual.
(o) State’s Strategies. Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

(1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

NHVR Strategies to achieve State Goals

Goal 1 --- Quality self-determined employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in New Hampshire.

Strategies and Activities:

- Support the Community Rehabilitation Program provider (CRP) restructuring/enhancing/re-engineering work to enhance services received through CRPs
  - Require CRPs to complete ACRE training in order to meet minimum certification requirements
  - Encourage CRPs to pursue and/or obtain CESP credential
  - Support training to demonstrate and enhance competencies
- Coordinate with the systems for community mental health centers and community developmental disability organizations to increase the expectations for integrated, competitive employment for individuals served under these programs
- Increase internal placement capacity
- Develop new relationships between NHVR and employers at a national, regional, and local level
  - Collaborate with CSAVR/National NET Team
  - Maintain partnerships with the NH Works systems including participation in business expos and job fairs
  - Continue using innovative marketing strategies, targeting businesses, to promote employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in New Hampshire.
- Strengthen relationships with partners to support those with disabilities who served in the U.S. military
- Promote self-sufficiency and informed choice through use of internal agency work incentive services
- Create a system for long-term supports for customers who have been unable to maintain consistent employment through Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Initiative
- Maintain options and technical assistance for customers and counselors related to the development and implementation of small business and self employment plans
- Improve access to demand occupations through sector-based training and employment strategies
- Target outreach efforts to support the employment outcomes of underserved populations
• Improve vocational rehabilitation services to the deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf blind communities
  o Provide appropriate training opportunities as needed for staff to develop and improve needed skills regarding services to the deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or deaf blind communities.
  o Provide appropriate training opportunities as needed for staff on job accommodations, and Assistive Technology (AT) used by person who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or deaf blind communities.
  o Increase delivery of, awareness of, and coordination of available educational and vocational services among at risk students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind.
  o Develop transition resources and increased opportunities for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind and their parents through collaboration with DOE, and other partner, School-to-Work transition program.
  o Collaborate with the Bureau of Special Education to establish suggested guidelines for the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or other programs that could improve outcomes for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind
  o Collaborate with NHVR Office of Services for Blind and Visually Impaired to improve services to students who are deaf and blind.
  o Improve job development, placement, and retention for customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf blind.
  o Collaborate with business community to improve business owners understanding and acceptance of customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf blind.
  o Improve availability of AT for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind so the new employee can perform job task on their first day of work.
  o Collaborate with NHVR Office of Services for Blind and Visually Impaired to improve job opportunities for customers who are deaf blind.
  o Improve ability to provide the needed services in job retention cases and understand how to treat that business as a customer of the agency.
  o Create opportunities to improve communication on the job for customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf blind during Job Search Workshops.
  o Continue to work with the Legislative Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing on projects relevant to the deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf blind communities.
  o To work on VR Guide for Provision of Interpreting Services for Individuals with Deaf and Hard of Hearing booklet

Measurement plan for all goal areas:
NHVR will achieve or exceed the established and negotiated common performance measures once identified through the appropriate approval process.

**Goal 2---Effective and efficient use of resources**

**Strategies and Activities:**

- Build and support relationships with providers and partners in the state
  - Develop menu of service for Community Rehabilitation Programs that links component pricing to specific customer needs (individual and business partner)
  - Monitor the performance-based payment system for obtaining and retaining employment
  - Implement a direct purchase process for hearing appliances in collaboration with audiologists
- Monitor fiscal management strategies that have been implemented to identify effectiveness
  - Maintain the centralized accounting functions
  - Utilize four-year budgetary planning process examining historical trends to influence fiscal and program planning
- Utilize data driven decision making
  - Align staff performance accountability measures with goals and priorities
  - Implementation of new case management system
  - Update and maintain quality assurance and accountability system
- Improve the availability and quality of interpreters in the state of New Hampshire.
  - Provide administrative support to the NH Interpreting Licensure Board
  - Coordinate and provide the NH Interpreter Screening Process to obtain additional licensed interpreters
  - Update and disperse Interpreter Directory as needed.
  - Work collaboratively with New Hampshire Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NHRID) and other organizations invested in the expansion of interpreting services to assess the need for and promote the use of all types of CART and interpreting services (e.g., ASL interpreters, CIos, oral interpreters, deaf blind interpreters, etc).
- Improve the accessibility to assistive device that can improve employment outcomes for customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf blind
  - Continue to use the Videophone RelaySystem (VRS) and CSDIO (Video Remote Interpreter) and provide training on how to use these services.
  - Increase awareness of the availability of this service at the Regional Offices and Employers across the state of New Hampshire.

**Goal 3---Increase the opportunities for training and college and career readiness for transition-aged youth**
NHVR will work with our partners on a state wide level to ensure that all students with disabilities are aware of the transition services of Self-Advocacy, Workplace Readiness, Work Based Learning, Job Exploration and Counseling and Counseling Regarding a Comprehensive Transition Program or Post-Secondary Education, available, per WIOA, on both a Generalized and Individualized level.

**Strategies and Activities:**

- Expand community employment opportunities and exploration of appropriate career paths, such as job shadows, informational interviews and work-based assessments
- Build partnerships with school transition personnel and serve as a resource for career planning
- Encourage career-focused and work-based experiences during the transition from school to work
- Identify students with disabilities who have been underserved and develop strategies for engagement
- Utilize alternative and extended learning opportunities (ELO) for skill acquisition and academic achievement for students who require non-traditional learning environments
- Support and continue to explore opportunities for sector-based and alternative education, employment and training programs for this targeted group, e.g., ACES, Earn and Learn, Project Search, Project Invest, Project Incomes and CHAMP

NHVR, in its RFP process, has asked potential bidders to provide regional consortium responses that will outline how “potentially eligible” students shall be identified and how the services shall be provided.

These responses will focus on enhancing NHVR’s relationship with the Bureau of Developmental Services, through its area agencies, and the Bureau of Behavioral Health, through its community mental health centers, and School Administrative Units (SAU’s) to better serve students with disabilities.

Respondents to the RFP will provide all of the Generalized transition services to students who are “potentially eligible”.

NHVR will provide all of the Individualized transition services for students who have been deemed “eligible”.

NHVR will begin working with students as young as age 16 to begin the transition process.

NHVR will continue to build on existing relationships with school transition personnel and seek to build relationships in those areas where none exists.

**Goal 4--Promote an environment that supports the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor - Customer relationship**
Strategies and Activities

- Support the development and retention of qualified rehabilitation staff through a comprehensive system of personnel development, leadership and succession planning
- Provide training to staff in the utilization of rehabilitation technology to enhance customer employability
- Utilize public forums and customer satisfaction survey data to foster continuous improvement of VR services
- Explore strategies to maximize customer engagement throughout the VR process
- Provide opportunities for individuals to make informed choice throughout the VR process
- Develop and implement a succession plan for the Agency
- Explore strategies and support needs to ensure counselor efficiency in caseload management, particularly in the area of maintaining appropriate contact with the customer.
- Ensure implementation of new case management system provides enhanced support for the counselor-customer relationship.

Goal 5—Provide ongoing support for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) in order to enhance their ability to achieve their statutorily-created mission

Strategies and Activities

- Inclusion of the SRC in the development of agency policy and state plan as well as other activities which will enhance the VR/SRC partnership
- Support the SRC and the SILC to build capacity for community involvement and participation
- Support the training of SRC members relative to the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- Support participation of SRC members relative to the National Coalition of SRC
- Support collaboration between the SRC and SILC

(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

Throughout the vocational rehabilitation process Rehabilitation Counselors routinely assess whether technology-related solutions would assist the customer in achieving a successful employment outcome as part of required services needed to be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment, and any subsequent amendments, as well as whether assistive technology services and/or devices are necessary to assist the individual to more fully participate in the vocational rehabilitation process.

The Agency recognizes that the term assistive technology service encompasses a broad spectrum of services that includes 'any service that directly assists an individual with a
disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device’ (Technology-Related Assistance Act, 1988). This includes the evaluation of an individual’s needs and may include services to assist in the selection, design, fitting, customizing, adaptation, application, maintenance, repair or the replacing of an assistive technology device(s). Included in this broad definition is the coordination and utilization of other therapies and interventions; and training or technical assistance to the customer about assistive technology services and in the use of any technology services that have been identified and/or provided.

One of the major needs in the area of assistive technology is to assure that customers and staff have access to information about techniques, devices and services that can effectively assist the customer to reach their employment goals. Technical assistance and training related to the assessments for and provision of a broad range of assistive technology services and devices are available from a number of assistive technology providers in the state including Rehabilitation Technology Consulting, NH Assistive Technology Evaluation & Consultation (NH-ATEC); the NH Association for the Blind, the NH Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center and the New Hampshire Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Initiative Project (DHHEIP). These sources provide services throughout the state. Counselors, staff and customers also utilize resources that are available online such as the Job Accommodation Network’s information and resources.

(3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program

As part of the continuing statewide studies of the needs of individuals with disabilities and how these needs may be most effectively met, New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation includes outreach procedures to populations such as racial and ethnic minorities.

Outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities over the next three years will include:

- Continuing to identify and partner with local agencies that serve diverse populations to enhance services provided to these individuals;
- Continue to promote use of multiple communication access options for our customers within the offices;
- Continue to promote cultural competency of all staff in order to effectively service NH’s multicultural population and recruit staff from the community; and
- Increased emphasis in the identification, referral and provision of effective vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities who are also a member of a minority group.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to assisting individuals with significant disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to secure suitable employment, and financial and personal independence by providing rehabilitation services. The Agency continually assesses the barriers and strategies to reduce barriers that relate to
equal access to the State VR program. In planning this year specific input was solicited from the Developmental Disabilities Council; the Statewide Independent Living Council; the State MH Planning Council; the Governor’s Commission on Disability; the Autism Council and the executive committee of the Special Education Administrators in the state.

In providing a quality customer-focused service delivery system that is timely, effective and responds to the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the state, the NHVR recognizes the need to expand and improve services to individuals with sensory, cognitive, physical and mental impairments who have traditionally not been served or have been underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program. This goal is to be accomplished through:

- Continue to maintain cooperative working relationships between NH Vocational Rehabilitation and community developmental disabilities organizations (area agencies) and community mental health centers.
- Continue to collaborate with stakeholder partners and invest in services to address the following needs related to individuals who are considered underserved.
- Seek and implement strategies to expand and improve the provision of supported employment services.
- Seek and implement strategies to expand and improve services to youth in transition from school to work.
- Seek strategies to improve service for persons with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Continue the support of the Benefits Specialist staff in Regional Offices.
- Seek strategies to expand and improve services to individuals who have experienced a traumatic brain injury.
- Seek strategies to improve services to individuals who experience autism spectrum disorders.
- Continue to increase collaboration efforts to provide vocational rehabilitation services for returning veterans.
- Continue to increase collaboration efforts with business partners to improve business owners understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities.
- Continue to coordinate services for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Include in the staff training program disability specific training in areas that have been identified as disability groups that may be unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program.

(4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

The agency has released a Request For Proposals in October 2015 for Transition Services to cover the Pre-Employment Transition Services as required in WIOA. The RFP seeks to identify and grant funding opportunities for regional consortiums of programs that will
provide curriculums in the five required Pre-Employment Transition Service areas. These services will be provided in a group format to eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities. Great efforts to include the community college system and other workforce partners will occur to allow for maximum benefits to students.

(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

As we examine and analyze data we can determine if additional initiatives will be established in this area in 2016.

(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation met each of the federal performance indicators for FY 14.

(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation maintains ongoing collaborative efforts with other workforce partners in the state. Agency staff participate on committees at various levels of the statewide workforce development system such as the Consortium, Interagency Directors Group (IDG) and the Interagency Business Team (IBT). This allows for collaboration as activities and strategies are developed. It also provides an opportunity to assure inclusion for individuals with disabilities is considered in planning and implementation of new services or initiatives or as revisions are made. This has led to collaboration with colleges with the Work Ready program and has assured vocational rehabilitation was involved in the development of the standardized Rapid Response presentation that is used when a New Hampshire business is going to be doing a massive layoff. In addition, NH Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have an on-site presence at local one stop centers to work with customers and to provide information and technical assistance to other workforce partners regarding providing equal access for individuals with disabilities.

(8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:

   (A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

   (B) support innovation and expansion activities; and

   (C) overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to assisting individuals with significant disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to secure suitable employment, and financial and personal independence by providing rehabilitation services. The Agency continually assesses the barriers and strategies to reduce barriers that relate to equal access to the state VR program. In planning this year specific input was solicited from the Developmental Disabilities Council; the statewide Independent Living Council; the state
MH Planning Council; the Governor’s Commission on Disability; the Autism Council and the executive committee of the Special Education Administrators in the state.

In providing a quality customer-focused service delivery system that is timely, effective and responds to the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the state, the NHVR recognizes the need to expand and improve services to individuals with sensory, cognitive, physical and mental impairments who have traditionally not been served or have been underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program. This goal is to be accomplished through:

- Continue to maintain cooperative working relationships between NH Vocational Rehabilitation and community developmental disabilities organizations (area agencies) and community mental health centers.
- Continue to collaborate with stakeholder partners and invest in services to address the following needs related to individuals who are considered underserved.
- Seek and implement strategies to expand and improve the provision of supported employment services.
- Seek and implement strategies to expand and improve services to youth in transition from school to work.
- Seek strategies to improve service for persons with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Continue the support of the Benefits Specialist staff in Regional Offices.
- Seek strategies to expand and improve services to individuals who have experienced a traumatic brain injury.
- Seek strategies to improve services to individuals who experience autism spectrum disorders.
- Continue to increase collaboration efforts to provide vocational rehabilitation services for returning veterans.
- Continue to coordinate services for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Include in the staff training program disability specific training in areas that have been identified as disability groups that may be unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program.

NHVR analyzed the characteristics of individuals determined to be ineligible to see if any trends existed that would identify that a specific group (disability, race, etc.) experienced barriers relating to equitable access to Vocational Rehabilitation services. During fiscal year 2015, 2,315 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services. Of these 2,315 individuals, 15 were found ineligible (less than 1%). The following is a breakdown of the characteristics of these 15 individuals.

**Closure Reasons**

Reason for Closure

02- Disability too significant 3
08- No disabling condition 5
11- Does not require VR services 5

Sex
Male 8
Female 5

Referral Source
Elementary or High School (public and/or private) 3
Physician or medical facility 3
Community Rehabilitation Program 2
Self-referred 2
Other 3

Disability Code
Visual Impairments 2
Cognitive 1
Mental & Emotional 5
Physical 4
Hearing Loss 1
No impairment 0

Race
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic 10
Hispanic origin 1
African American: 1
American Indian: 0
Asian: 1
Pacific Islander: 0

While this data did not demonstrate the existence of any trends related to a specific group (disability, race, etc.), NH Vocational Rehabilitation remains committed to assuring that no applicant or group of applicants is excluded from services solely on the basis of type of disability and that the Agency does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, disability, race, color, creed, national origin, marital status or sexual orientation in its programs, activities and employment practices. Ongoing strategies to overcome identified barriers to equitable access include:
• Information and materials are provided to applicants and eligible individuals through appropriate modes of communication, i.e., the language or method of communication understandable to the individual.

• NH Vocational Rehabilitation ensures that Counselors are aware of how an individual’s cognitive disability might affect his or her ability to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process and the need to provide supports and accommodations to these individuals in the process.

• Working with the Bureau of Behavioral Health toward strategies and practices to improve supported employment outcomes.

• Exploring long-term funding options such as Partnership Plus, for individuals who need extended supports.

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. Describe:

(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

The following describes progress in achieving the goals and priorities and the uses of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion activities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015

**Goal 1---Quality self-determined employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in New Hampshire.**

Below is a look at the old system of standards and indicators and where the agency would have landed in FY15.

During fiscal year 2015, NH Vocational Rehabilitation did not meet all of the federal indicators under the federal standard 1: Employment Outcomes.

1.1 The number of persons achieving employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year. Did not meet in FY 15. FY 14 outcomes were 1091; FY 15 outcomes were 1042, a difference of -49.

1.2 The percentage of individuals rehabilitated will equal or exceed 55.8%.

Did not meet in FY 15. The percentage of individuals rehabilitated was 44.74% in FY 15.

1.3 The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the program in competitive employment as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all employment in NH will equal or exceed .52.

Met in FY 15. In FY15 the ratio for average hourly earnings was .56.

1.4 Of all the individuals who achieve competitive employment, the difference between the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic
support at closure compared to the percent at application. The difference must equal or exceed 53 (math difference)

Did not meet in FY 15. In FY15, the percentage of this difference was 43.496.

1.5 The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio of the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities will equal or exceed .80

Met in FY 15. In FY15 the service rate for minorities vs. all non-minority individuals was .884.

NHVR will demonstrate equal or improved performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

1.6 The average number hours worked by persons rehabilitated. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Baseline: Average number of hours worked by individuals achieving an employment outcome - 27.7 hours per week. In FY 15 the average hours worked by individuals achieving an employment outcome was 26.9.

1.7 The number of SSI recipients and SSDI beneficiaries who achieve Substantial Gainful activity earnings level for at least nine months. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Baseline: 95 customers who achieved a successful employment outcome in FY 09 and were identified as receiving SSI and/or SSDI at application met the SGA earning levels for at least nine months. In FY 14, there were 97 customers who met these criteria.

1.8 The percent of persons rehabilitated in full-time competitive employment who are covered by health insurance through employment. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Baseline: 24% of the individuals achieving an employment outcome. In FY 15, 38% of the individuals achieving an employment outcome were covered by health insurance through employment.

1.9 Number of successful employment outcomes after participating in post-secondary education. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Baseline: 96 individuals achieved a successful vocational outcome after participating in post-secondary education. In FY 15, 75 individuals achieved a successful vocational outcome after participating in post-secondary education.

1.10 The number of individuals who successfully achieve self-employment. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Baseline: Eleven (11) individuals were closed successfully with employment goals that included self-employment in FY 09. In FY 15, five individuals were closed successfully with employment goals that included self-employment.

Additional information and activity in 2015 and continuing into 2016 that has impact on this goal area has included:
In reviewing the outcome data for FY 15, NHVR looked at the economy in which our customers were working to obtain jobs. The Agency recognizes that New Hampshire, along with the rest of the country is still in a state of economic flux and recovery. Available resources reviewed included ‘Road to Recovery, New Hampshire’s Economy 2010’ and ‘NH Vital Signs’, publications from the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security. The statistics show that during the latter half of calendar year 2009 and into 2010, New Hampshire’s economy was still showing the impact of the recession and the changes in health care. During the downturn NH experienced increased gross job losses while simultaneously experiencing a decrease in job gains. This has led to a prolonged period of net job loss. In addition to job loss, NH workers were also forced to work part time for economic reasons. These workers include those that normally work full time but are currently employed for less than 35 hours per week due to slack work or slow business conditions. This group also includes those who would prefer to be working full time but have been unable to find a full time job. During the period from July 2009 through June 2010 approximately 5.3 percent of NH’s employed were employed part time for economic reasons (this is an increase from approximately 2.7 percent reported in the time frame July 2007 through June 2008). This increase is noted to be a function of the recession and slow recovery as many employees were working reduced hours to avoid layoffs and employers were reluctant to hire full-time workers until business conditions improved.

The economy appears to be improving somewhat but it is still remains somewhat flat. Preliminary 2012 figures from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) note the unemployment rate at 5.6 percent. This compared with 6.4% at the height of the recession (2009) and a 3.6% unemployment rate in the years preceding the recession (2007).

It was also of note that there was a downturn in labor force participation rates by age group during the recession that may have also impacted NHVR customers in the same age grouping. New Hampshire’s Employment Security’s Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau noted that “Young persons in the age groups of 16 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years had lower participation rates for 2009, declining from 52.2 percent to 46.0 percent and from 78.9 percent to 74 percent respectively. These represent large single year drops in participation, but also continue a long-term trend of declining participation.”

The preliminary 2012 figures (BLS) show continued low participation rates in these groups at 45.4 percent for the 16 to 19 age group and 79.6 for the 20 to 24 age group.

Jim Hinson, Supervisor V and designated Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Management Liaison continues to oversee NHVR efforts to restructure, enhance and re-engineer services provided to VR customers through Community Rehabilitation Program providers. He routinely meets with CRPs to provide individualized and group training, reinforce the VR Placement Process and ensure continuity. In order to continually improve the VR Placement Process, minor adjustments are made in order to simplify the process.
The CRP Management Liaison continues to meet regularly with Community Rehabilitation Program providers to address any concerns, provide follow-up training, foster open communications and to ensure that the VR Placement Process is being followed. To help the VR customer select a CRP and to create an opportunity for the CRPs to market their services directly to the VR customer, we created the 2015 Customer Guide to Job Development. In this guide we explain the VR Placement Process, identify everyone’s roles and responsibilities, and give each CRP space to tell the VR customer about themselves and their services. The Customer Guide to Job Development will be updated as necessary and we will continue to make it available to our staff and customers.

To increase capacity and competency in individuals providing job placement services in NH, NHVR will require everyone involved in direct job placement services to participate in the four part comprehensive training series for the national ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators) certificate.

In 2011, NHVR completed their work with the Granite State Employment Project (a project of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)) and other community partners to purchase the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Training curriculum. This training provides the competency-based model that we needed to establish a formal CRP certification and is routinely updated. In 2015 we now have a core group of five certified ACRE Trainers and over 300 job developers, special education and Direct Support Professionals have completed this training.

Students who complete the ACRE program are being encouraged to take their training to the next level by taking the three-hour proctored exam that can earn them the title of Certified Employment Support Professional. NH now has 63 Certified Employment Support Professionals and another exam has been scheduled for 2016. The NHVR Statewide Coordinator of Corporate Relations (Jim Hinson) has earned both of these certifications, and serves as our CRP Management Liaison. He is also the point of contact for employers, supervisors, and managers who still have questions after attending the original informational training that was provided for supporting/supervising employment professionals. Mr. Hinson was appointed to the Employment Support Professional Certification Council (ESPCC) and become a voting member on September 28, 2012.

The Certified Employment Services Professional (CESP) credential recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide integrated employment services to a variety of client populations. The CESP credential is intended to help employers, employees and potential employees by increasing the visibility of – and access to – competent individuals in the profession. Individuals who earn the CESP credential have demonstrated knowledge of the facilitation and advocacy skills necessary to help establish and expand equitable employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The CESP certification program is governed by the Employment Services Professional Certification Council (ESPCC) which was established in 2011 by the APSE Board of
Directors to establish and implement policies and procedures for the certification program and to oversee the development of the CESP examination.

NHVR continues to work to determine the best ways to connect with the Developmental Disability (DD) system. With anticipated budgetary changes within the DD system, Lisa Hatz, NHVR Director, will continue to work with the Bureau of Developmental Services to discuss how this will impact VR and how we can best work together to serve the DD population. Project Search has assisted many customers with developmental disabilities in the last several years to obtain great employment situations.

Our two Employment Specialists are continuing to provide valuable connections and stability in Manchester and Concord areas. They are facilitating Workforce Coalitions that bring together all of our local community partners to enhance job development for our customers. In addition, both of our Employment Specialists have successfully completed ACRE training and earned the CESP credential.

NHVR continues to work aggressively with CSAVR/National Employment Team. As a result of this effort, links are being established between NHVR customers and our national business community. Job leads from Lowes, Home Depot, FFA, DOT, US Forest Services, US Fish and Game, USDA, IRS, J. Lodge, DeCA, FHWA, HHS, CVS, SBA, CVS Caremark, TJ Maxx, Bass Pro Shop and many others are routinely shared with VR customers and direct contact is made when needed.

NHVR continues to work with NH Works and other community partners around the State of NH. NHVR participates in major business expos, HR conferences, Chamber of Commerce events, job fairs, and other disability-specific conferences around the State of NH.

NHVR continues to attend events throughout the state and use innovative marketing strategies such as We Are Success and I Am Success. These campaigns, along with our collaboration with the NH Division of Economic Development, are having an impact on businesses seeing us as a credible resource. More than ever before, businesses are contacting us to fill their open positions and answer their disability-related questions. Furthermore, we team up with the NH Division of Economic Development to recognize businesses that routinely recruit, hire, and/or retain employees with disabilities. As a result of increasing our outreach efforts, New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation was named 2012 “Business Assistance Organization of the Year” by Business NH Magazine and the NH Association of Chamber of Commerce.

In 2011, Jim Hinson, Supervisor V, was appointed by Governor John Lynch to serve on the Commission on PTSD and TBI. At the end of 2015, the Commission on PSTD and TBI concluded their research and reported their findings to Governor Maggie Hassan. These findings will help us in our efforts to provide direct services to veterans across NH and to increase the number of veterans applying for NHVR services.

In 2014 Governor Margaret Hassan established a permanent Commission on the Effects of Service-Connected Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. In an effort
to continue discussing these important issues and determine how, as a community, we can better serve our veterans, service members and their families. Mr. Hinson was re-appointed by Governor Margaret Hassan to serve on the Commission on PTSD and TBI.

During FY 15, two internal benefits counselors (Portsmouth and Manchester Regional Offices) provided benefit counseling to 386 customers. Seventy-six of those customers who had received internal benefits counseling during the vr process were closed status 26. Our internal benefits counseling staff also continue to jointly partner with the Institute on Disability with respect to the Real Study, a National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) research project designed to provide money coaching and benefits counseling to job seeking and employed individuals with disabilities.

During FY 15 continued technical assistance and training was provided to staff to provide them with enhanced information and tools to assist customers choosing to pursue self-employment.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services continues to be active and support activities and efforts, including providing administrative support to the NH Interpreter Licensure Board; maintaining the NH Interpreter Directory; and working collaboratively with New Hampshire Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NHRID) and other organizations invested in the expansion of interpreting services to assess the need for and promote the use of all types of CART and interpreting services (e.g., ASL interpreters, CDIs, oral interpreters, deaf blind interpreters, PEPNet 2.0 (iTransition) and Hearing Aids Committee, etc).

The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services provided information and support to the counselors working with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing throughout the year.

**Goal 2---Effective and efficient use of resources**

NHVR will achieve or exceed the required federal standard for the following indicator

2.1 Rehabilitation rate will equal or exceed 55.8%. Did not meet in FY 15. The Rehabilitation rate in FY 15 was 44.74%.

NHVR will demonstrate equal or improved performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

2.2 Percent for whom eligibility is determined in 60 days or less from application unless the customer agrees to an extension. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item was measured against this baseline. In FY 09 eligibility was determined in 60 days or less from application for 89% of the customers who applied for services. In FY 15, the average days to determine eligibility was 34 days.

2.3 Percent of accurate presumptive eligibility decisions for persons eligible for SSI or SSDI. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Target set for 2010 was 90%. During an FY 11 case review the agency achieved a rating of 76% in this area. The
Agency is working to reinforce documentation in this area. Case review of FY 12 revealed that only relatively small sample of the cases reviewed received SSA benefits and were reviewed on this criterion. Of those 51% of the cases reviewed demonstrated that the presumption of eligibility was documented in case notes.

2.4 Percent for whom IPEs are developed within 120 days or less from eligibility unless the customer agrees to an extension. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item was measured against this baseline. Target set for 2010 - 90%. The percentage of cases for whom IPE’s were developed in FY 11 within 120 days or less from eligibility was: 75%. In reviewing the data, it was identified that in FY 10 the average time to develop a Plan for Employment was 4.04 months. This is a reduction in time to complete the plan from FY 09 when the average time was 4.27 months to complete the plan. In FY 15, the average days from eligibility to plan were 237 days.

2.5 Average consumer satisfaction using the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) index model. Target – an ACSI score of 70 or above. From Customer Satisfaction Survey – Among all customers surveyed in 2011 the satisfaction index was 78.

2.6 Average expended per rehabilitation for the life of the case. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. FY 11 data on this item was measured against this baseline. Average expended per rehabilitation in FY 09 – services purchased/life of the case – was $4,300. Average expended per rehabilitation: In FY 15 the average cost per rehabilitation was $4,866.

2.7 Annual number of persons in service (status 02-24 +32). A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 11 data on this item was measured against this baseline. Number served in FY 09 was 7,920. In FY15, NHVR had 8,601 persons in service status (02-24 + 32).

2.8 Annual contribution to IPE costs through comparable benefits and services. At the beginning of FY 10, it was identified that the current CMS does not collect this data. Work in 2010 identified a collection strategy. In FY 10, forty-nine (49) cases were identified as using comparable benefits ($55,803). In FY 11 use of comparable benefits was recorded in cases ($92,757). In FY 15, use of comparable benefits as recorded in 26 cases for a total of $65,295.

2.9 The average wage achieved by persons referred to placement or supported employment providers. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item was measured against this baseline. The average wage for all persons referred to CRPs for placement services for 2009 was $9.11. In FY 15 the average wage achieved by persons referred to placement or supported employment providers was: $10.04
2.10 Percent of cases reviewed for which there is evidence that the service provider was given clear information about the consumer’s employment goals and expectations. Data not currently tracked in the Agency case management system (CMS) – this item was extended based on current work with CRPs both internal and through the statewide EIS system. However, due to budget cuts within New Hampshire the statewide EIS system project has been put on an indefinite hold. As a result the Agency sought other methods to gather this data and plans to include a review that was completed mid FY 11. The case review demonstrated that there was evidence that the service provider was provided with clear information about the customer’s employment goals and expectations 77% of the time. This review included the new forms and reporting that were developed and trained in late FY10, however many of the cases reviewed were referred to the CRP prior to the new processes. It is anticipated that this percentage will increase as counselors implement the new CRP referral process. Case review of FY 12 identified that in the cases where a customer was working with a CRP, only 42% of the time was there documentation in the file that the provider (CRP) was given clear information about customer’s employment goals and expectations.

2.11 Percent of cases reviewed for which referral to a job placement or supported employment service provider was appropriate based on the individual needs of the consumer. Data not currently tracked in the CMS – this item was extended based on current work with CRPs both internal and the statewide EIS system. As noted above due to budget cuts the statewide EIS system project has been put on an indefinite hold. As a result the Agency sought other methods to gather this data, including a case review that revealed that 93% of the cases referred to a CRP had documentation that demonstrated the referral was appropriate based on the needs of the customer. Case review of FY 12 identified that 81% of the cases reviewed showed the referral for job placement / supported employment services was appropriate based on the needs of the customer.

2.12 Percent of cases reviewed for which there is evidence of counseling and guidance provided by NHVR. This item was not included in past case review activity so no baseline was able to be determined from existing data prior to FY 11. From case review completed in FY 11, 78% of the cases reviewed demonstrated evidence that counseling and guidance were provided by NHVR. Case review of FY 12 identified that 62% of the cases showed documented evidence of counseling and guidance provided by NHVR.

Additional information and activity in 2015 and continuing into 2016 that has impact on this goal area has included:

NHVR has worked the last year to ensure the new component pricing and CRP services have had a smooth transition. The agency is looking at adding new incentive services to link directly to the RSA standards and indicators and common performance measures.
agency is exploring several models of direct purchasing for hearing aids to assist in cost savings.

The agency has monitored and discussed counselor performance on a monthly basis with the counselors’ supervisors. Various strategies have been employed to provide support to struggling counselors. In FY 15 the Agency worked on updating our quality assurance program and this continues into FY 14. Attending the QA summit was instrumental in viewing other systems to support what we would like to create in NH and staff are planning to attend the upcoming summit to gather additional information and resources. The Training Officer continues to work with the Regional Performance Evaluation and Quality Assurance workgroup toward assisting the agency in the development and maintenance of a quality assurance system.

**Goal 3---Increase educational attainment, employment and self-sufficiency of transition-aged youth.** (In NH for the data related to transition youth, the Agency includes individuals referred to the Agency who are 21 or younger at time of referral.)

NHVR will demonstrate equal or improved performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

3.1 Number of new applications from transition students. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item was measured against this baseline. In FY 09 there were 602 new applications received from transition-aged customers. In FY14, 664 applications were received from transition students.

3.2 Number of new IPEs for transition students. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item was measured against this baseline. In FY 09 there were 340 new IPEs for transition-aged customers. In FY14, 364 IPE’s were developed for transition students.

3.3 Rehabilitation rate for transition students. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item will be measured against this baseline. In FY 09 the rehabilitation rate for transition-aged customers was 66.8%. The Rehabilitation Rate for transition students in FY15 was 50%.

3.4 Of transition students who achieve competitive employment, the difference between the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at closure compared to the percent at application. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 2011 data on this item will be measured against this baseline. FY 09 - For transition-aged customers achieving an employment outcome 78% reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support compared to application. In FY15, the difference between the
percent who reported their own income as the single source of support at closure compared to application was 78%.

3.5 Average hourly wage of transition students rehabilitated. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. Fiscal year 11 data on this item will be measured against this baseline. The average hourly wage for transition-aged customers who achieved an employment outcome in FY 09 was $8.97 per hour. The average hourly wage of transition students in FY15 was $9.67.

3.6 Number of transition-aged students that are participating in a post-secondary or training program following graduation. In FY 13, the number of transition-aged students participating in post-secondary training program following graduation was 171. In FY 15 the number of students participating in post-secondary or training programs was 149.

3.7 Number of transition aged students who achieve competitive employment who attended a post-secondary school as part of their IPE. In FY 13 the number was 9. For FY 15, 15 transition aged students who attended post-secondary school as part of their IPE achieved a competitive outcome.

Additional information and activity in 2015 and continuing into 2016 that has impact on this goal area has included:

CRP menu of services updated. This provides transition counselors with greater ability to provide these services to students. A transition work group has been developed to continue to work on the menu of services particularly for transition.

Transition Coordinator continues to meet quarterly with transition counselors in the regional offices to provide information regarding state and national transition initiatives and to provide other related support.

Transition Coordinator meets with a workgroup comprised of counselors and supervisors bi-monthly to review transition services and practices, learn about outside resources for customers and troubleshoot difficult cases.

Need to have greater discussion as to how we want to use CRPs or other opportunities to provide these opportunities, particularly work-based assessments.

The Agency continues to utilize the Power Point, timeline for services and youth friendly brochure as a means to ensure a consistent VR message across the state regarding transition. It has been particularly beneficial for use amongst new counselors working with schools as well as presenting to outside stakeholder groups.

The Agency continues to participate in programming designed to reengage at-risk students in their education in the greater Manchester and Somersworth areas. Strategies such as ELO development, soft skill building, paid work experience, GED attainment and, internships and attendance of Adult Ed classes are being utilized for engagement of students.
Presentations and materials have been provided to over a dozen schools as of February 2011. This presentation has been given to a number of conferences, special education directors groups, etc. A transition specific, student friendly brochure has also been developed for schools and counselors to disseminate.

Students who are at-risk were identified through the ARRA funded projects covering Manchester, Portsmouth and Somersworth. Strategies such as ELO development, soft skill building, paid work experience, internships and attendance of Adult Ed classes are being utilized for engagement of students.

The Manchester area Granite State Independent Living's Earn and Learn project has been tremendously successful in reengaging students into school, and preventing drop out, and developing career and work skills. This project used ELOs (extended learning opportunities) to allow students to gain high school credit, and paid work experiences to gain employment skills. As of March 2014, 150 students have graduated from the program, 459 ELO's have been completed, 320 full academic credits have been obtained, and an additional 74 credits were gained in the computer lab.

33 students have graduated from high school and 6 students obtained their GED

107 work experiences have been created for the students out in the community

45% of the students, or 35 are gainfully employed

The Strafford Learning Center in Somersworth provides Earn and Learn for six weeks in the summer. Participating students gain ELO credit and paid work experience. Since 2011, 25 students were enrolled in the program, 20 completing the program. 19.5 English credits have been awarded. A total of .75 credits in work based learning elective credit for ELO have been granted. There is the intent to offer more ELO credit in the future.

The Bureau also continues to support and participate in transition programming in the areas of employment and independent living skill building, sector-based employment, transition planning/partnership and Autism.

ACES (A Chance to Experience Success) hosted its first cohort of students during July 2010 at Keene State College. To date, 46 students with LD/ADHD have participated in a two-week on campus experience focusing on career development and building independent living skills. Students develop a portfolio of their experience to build stronger IEPs and IPEs. As part of their portfolio, students develop Measurable Post School Goals, Course of Study and Transition Activities, all essential elements of their transition plan within their IEP. Several students will be pursuing some type of post-secondary training or education following graduation with VR support. Upon completion of ACES 2012, the VR transition coordinator has implemented follow-up meetings with the students and each of their transition teams in an effort to assist the student to build off of their experience and to strengthen partnerships amongst the schools and VR through transition planning. Through this, students, their families and school staff have reported a greater sense of self-awareness and confidence upon completing the program. Since 2012, students participate
in assessments that look at knowledge of self as it relates to the world of work and self-esteem. These are administered at the start and completion of the program. To date, 80% report an increase of knowledge of self and the world of work by program completion, and 95% report an increase in self-esteem upon program completion.

Upcoming additions to the program include:

- Accepted students and their transition teams will participate in prep meetings for the program to discuss expectations of the student, family, school and VR before, during and after the program
- Students will receive individual recommendations on how to address mental and physical health needs upon completing ACES that could impact employment and/or independent living

Project SEARCH is a school-to-work program in the medical industry for students with cognitive and physical disabilities in their final year of high school eligibility. The program is currently located at St Joseph Hospital (Nashua), Concord Hospital (Concord), Cheshire Medical Center (Keene), Portsmouth Regional Hospital (Seacoast region), and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (Lebanon). Curriculum includes an orientation to familiarize students with hospital protocol, culture and the facility. Students work with the instructor and career trainers to explore internship options in hospital departments ranging from the supply chain and food and nutrition services to the rehabilitation center and imaging, then ultimately decide which internship sites best fit their career goals.

On average, students are working 18 hours per week and earning $8.53/hour. Examples of some of the jobs obtained include Facilities Assistant, Dermatology Assistant, Podiatry Assistant, Phlebotomy Lab Assistant, OB/GYN Assistant, Project Assistant, Office Support Staff, LNA, and Housekeeper. As of 2012, in coordination with BDS and NHVR, SEARCH sites are receiving quarterly technical assistance from national SEARCH consultants relative to effective program implementation.

The START certificate program within the hospitality industry continues - The START (Skills, Tasks, And Results Training) Hospitality Program allows NH students over 18 years of age with special needs to earn an internationally recognized entry-level certification from the American Hotel and Lodging Association’s Educational Institute.

Project INCOME is a training program for office skills in the Manchester/Nashua area. Participants are young adults who experience high functioning Autism. The program began in the Spring of 2012. A total of 26 individuals have participated in the program, 23 have graduated, and 15 are gainfully employed with eight actively seeking employment. Average wage and hours worked per week $10.03 at 17.8 hours/week. Interns have received job offers from such employers as BAE Systems, HUD and the City of Nashua.

STRIDE is a customized 20-week internship program for adults with disabilities set at Lowell General Hospital and, new this year, Plymouth State University. Students learn skills and intern in various departments overseen by Sodexo Managers, including Environmental
Services, Dining Services, Grounds and Maintenance, and more. Currently, an individual receiving services through the Bureau's Berlin office is participating in the program at Plymouth State.

VR continues working with Project RENEW, to bring their person-centered planning approach to VR in our work with students with mental health and emotional and behavioral challenges.

The Agency continues to seek ways in which to better serve our customer population with Autism. The Family Centered Transition Project focuses on providing a MAPS transition planning and SPECS training process for individuals ages 16-24 and their families. This is in partnership with the Strafford Learning Center and the UNH Institute on Disability. The other program, AXIS, is in partnership with an Area Agency, Community Bridges in Concord. This program provides life coaching toward employment for both youth and adults. In addition to LifeMAP through the Asperger's Association of New England, these are now services that are available to NHVR customers.

Goal 4 ---Promote an environment that supports the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor - Customer relationship

4.1 Number of rehabilitation counseling staff who have achieved the CSPD standard. A baseline was determined utilizing FY 09 data. The FY 09 count of rehabilitation counseling staff who have achieved the CSPD standard is 30. Ten staff were currently working toward the CSPD standard. There were two vacancies. Staffing at the end of FY 15: 27 rehabilitation counseling staff have achieved the CSPD standard. Two additional staff are expected to complete the required training during FY 2016. There are twelve caseload carrying counselors currently in a plan toward meeting the CSPD and three vacancies.

4.2 Percent of cases reviewed for which there is evidence that assistive technology services and assistive technology devices were assessed and used as necessary for individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process. It was identified that current case review data collection did not include this element. It was further identified that this is a training need area for staff. In-service training has included assistive tech services and devices and will continue to target this area as a training need in FY 12 through FY 15. Case review of FY 12 cases identified that that 70% of the time the case documentation showed evidence of an assessment of the need for assistive technology services and devices.

4.3 Percent of cases reviewed for which there is evidence that the consumer had the opportunity to exercise informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process. It was identified that current case review data collection did not include this element. It was further identified that this is a training need area for staff. Case review process was updated to include monitoring of this element. Rehabilitation counselors have consistently included informed choice in the process (97%); as a result we are no longer tracking this item as part of the Agency goals and priorities.
4.4 Percent of cases reviewed for which there is evidence of continued contact and customer engagement throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. It was identified that current case review data collection did not include this element. Case review completed in FY 11 identified that 68% of the time the case documentation showed evidence of continued contact and customer engagement. The Agency is taking a closer look at this area including review of procedure and recording toward improvement in this area. Case review of FY 12 casework identified that 71.1% of the time the case documentation showed evidence of continued contact and customer engagement.

**Additional information and activity in 2015 and continuing into 2016 that has impact on this goal area has included:**

To support the development and retention of qualified rehabilitation staff through a comprehensive system of personnel development, leadership and succession planning, the agency has been working with a consultant to develop strategic and comprehensive strategies for addressing the changing workforce, succession planning and agency goals and priorities.

Toward implementing strategies to maximize customer engagement throughout the VR process, counselor standards have been implemented that provide additional emphasis on the need for ongoing and consistent communication between the customer and the counselor in the VR process.

**Goal 5---Provide ongoing support for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**

5.1 Number of annual stakeholder meetings exceed or are equal to four per year.

- Met in FY 15. Meetings have been planned for FY 16.

5.2 Annual ratings by SRC/SILC members related to the effectiveness of their meetings and opportunities for meaningful involvement.

An assessment completed by the SRC revealed that on a scale from 1 – 5 (where 5 was excellent), the SRC membership who participated in the survey provided the following ratings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of SRC meetings</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of SRC meetings</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for meaningful involvement</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate information is provided to actively participate in Council meetings</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific comments received relative to the survey questions:

Q2. Please provide any suggestions or recommendations you may have to help the SRC be more effective and to enhance the participation of members in Council activities.

• There is a lot of information that is sent. Is it possible to have a brief summary of key points to focus on when sharing large documents and reports?
• I feel we need to have another retreat to look at our goals and objectives of the SRC
• SRC members should be recognized and complimented for years of services
• More opportunity for interaction of members in policy review
• N/A Thank you...
• I would think all new members receive some training regarding mission, committees, etc. Would be helpful at some level

An assessment completed by the SILC revealed that on a scale from 1 – 5 (where 5 was excellent), the SILC membership who participated in the survey provided the following ratings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness of SILC meetings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of SILC meetings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities for meaningful involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adequate information is provided to actively participate in Council meetings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information is provided in a way to be easily understood</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting location</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility of meeting and materials</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Specific comments received relative to the survey questions:

Q2. Please provide any suggestions or recommendations you may have to help the SILC be more effective and to enhance the participation of members in Council activities.
• Remind members to come to meetings prepared by reading materials provided or if unable to access materials being responsible to ask for them again or in different format prior to meeting; be responsive to emails from other members regarding task force work

**Additional information about the SRC:** The State Rehabilitation Council has intensified its efforts to recognize successful VR customers, their counselors, and employers. The SRC is actively involved with the reiterations of the annual Agency customer satisfaction survey, as well as the development and modifications of Agency Policy. The SRC continues to work in close partnership with the Agency as it reviews data in order to make recommendations relative to service delivery, priorities, and the “order of selection.”

**Additional information about the SILC:** The Statewide Independent Living Council has undertaken two projects which are focused on the dissemination of information to individuals living with disabilities, community providers, state agencies, family members, and legislators. The SILC Monthly Resource Guide is sent to over 500 individuals and organizations. These resource guides are geared toward a specific topic each month. Guides have been published providing resource information on such topics as successful school transitions; healthy eating; deaf/hard of hearing; blindness/visual impairment; transportation; health care, etc. As a result of this effort, the SILC has increased the awareness of its mission and role within New Hampshire. The SILC also publishes a monthly newsletter which is sent to over 750 individuals and organizations. The newsletter highlights the work of the SILC and its members in its mission to promote the IL philosophy.

**Additionally activity related to identifying activities targeted to improve services delivery to individuals who have been unserved or underserved include:**

Continuing to maintain cooperative working relationships between NH Vocational Rehabilitation and community developmental disabilities organizations (area agencies) and community mental health centers. Administrative staff maintain ongoing relationships via membership on key committees as well as collaboration with staff on a local and statewide level including participation on the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Statewide Advisory Committee, and the Employment Leadership Committee from the Bureau of Developmental Services.

Agency staff participate with the Autism Council which has set as its yearly priority the development of regional collaboratives and completion of a resource driven web site. This work group is tasked with providing the resources relative to employment and independent living. There is the noted link to Project SEARCH and to ensuring that students on the spectrum have opportunities for inclusion as soon as possible. Several members of the work group have joined together to develop an ARRA proposal for VR which would provide after school socialization and skill development as a prevocational approach that would prepare students on the spectrum for inclusion in sector-based training and provide
a blueprint for strategies and support they will need to be successful in industry-based training.

**Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 15.**

The Agency reserves funds for innovation and expansion activities each year. Funds budgeted for these activities for FY 15 were $109,671. Funds set aside for these activities for FY 14 are $109,000. The following describes progress in achieving the goals and priorities and the uses of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion activities for FY 15.

Monies set aside for innovation and expansion were used to support the Agency goals and priorities identified in section 1 above including:

- Support of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council
- Support for Business Networking efforts
- Self-Employment development activities including staff training
- Strategic planning
- Customer Satisfaction survey

(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Number of individuals who will receive service provided with funds under part B of Title VI of the Act: It is anticipated that NHVR will serve 1,700 persons in supported employment during fiscal years 2017-2021.

Analysis - Goals were set at: Planned to rehabilitate – 425 persons in supported employment during fiscal years 2017-2021, approximately 85 each year. In FY 14 the agency served 723 individuals requiring supported employment services with 112 of these individuals achieving an employment outcome. The Agency has met previous set goals in this area.

The majority of these customers were, as expected, individuals with developmental disabilities and/or mental illness as these are the disabilities for which funding is available for long-term supports after vocational rehabilitation services are completed. These funding sources have had various challenges to their resources over the last several years. The Agency does, and will continue to, seek alternative sources for long-term supports, including the use of natural supports, and benefits planning as appropriate, to the individual.

For individuals who require supported employment supports the transition to extended services follows the timeframe established in the Individualized Plan for Employment and
is no later than 18 months after placement in supported employment, unless under special circumstances a longer period is necessary for the individual to be stabilized in the job. Prior to the transition the counselor must assure that the extended services are available and can be provided without a hiatus in services.

The Agency has been collaborating with the Bureau of Developmental Services to assist in the roll out of some new State Rules that will govern how individuals with developmental disabilities will achieve long-term support funding. The new rule will ensure that if someone is in an employment setting they will have the long-term supports to maintain that job. It also supports that students still in high school can achieve long-term supports while still in school and prior to graduation. The rule also helps families understand that employment should be the first option when looking at goals after high school graduation.

In addition the Bureau has also added in employment goals to the contracts of the 10 area agencies. These changes are monumental changes. The Bureau staff are currently out in the community training area agency staff in how to best utilize these new rules.

The agency has also added in a new service called “situational assessment.” The situational assessment is a specialized service that provides a VR participant with the opportunity to demonstrate their work skills at a real and functioning worksite (unpaid) within the community. This service will allow this agency to evaluate and identify the necessary services a participant will need to be successful in an actual competitive employment situation. The agency has lined up the insurance component of this service and has had a small team of VR staff that has worked on this diligently. Select vendors at each of the regional offices, will be able to provide this service. These vendors will be selected based on their’ demonstrated abilities to complete this assessment.

NHVR staff are also working on individual pilot programs to assist in expanding our supported employment services and vendor knowledge base.

(3) The VR program’s performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation is currently examining performance accountability information under section 116 of WIOA and will have performance indicator data once they have been negotiated with the other state entities and approved accordingly.

(4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

The Agency reserves funds for innovation and expansion activities each year. Funds budgeted for these activities for FY 13 were $109,671. Funds set aside for these activities for FY 14 are $109,000. The following describes progress in achieving the goals and priorities and the uses of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion activities for FY 13.

Monies set aside for innovation and expansion were used to support the Agency goals and priorities identified in section 1 above including:

• Support of the state Rehabilitation Council and the statewide Independent Living Council
• Support for Business Networking efforts
• Self-Employment development activities including staff training
• Strategic planning
• Customer Satisfaction survey

(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services. Include the following:

(1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

(2) The timing of transition to extended services.

Number of individuals who will receive service provided with funds under part B of Title VI of the Act: It is anticipated that NHVR will serve 1,700 persons in supported employment during fiscal years 2017-2021.

Analysis - Goals were set at: Planned to rehabilitate – 425 persons in supported employment during fiscal years 2017-2021, approximately 85 each year. In FY 15 the agency served 862 individuals requiring supported employment services with 120 of these individuals achieving an employment outcome.

The majority of these customers were, as expected, individuals with developmental disabilities and/or mental illness as these are the disabilities for which funding is available for long-term supports after vocational rehabilitation services are completed. These funding sources have had various challenges to their resources over the last several years. The Agency does, and will continue to, seek alternative sources for long-term supports, including the use of natural supports, and benefits planning as appropriate, to the individual.

For individuals who require supported employment supports the transition to extended services follows the timeframe established in the Individualized Plan for Employment and is no later than 18 months after placement in supported employment, unless under special circumstances a longer period is necessary for the individual to be stabilized in the job. Prior to the transition the counselor must assure that the extended services are available and can be provided without a hiatus in services.

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The agency has also added a new service called “situational assessment.” The situational assessment is a specialized service that provides a VR participant with the opportunity to demonstrate their work skills at a real and functioning worksite (unpaid) within the community. This service will allow this agency to evaluate and identify the necessary services a participant will need to be successful in an actual competitive employment situation. The agency has lined up the insurance component of this service and has had a small team of VR staff that has worked on this diligently. Select vendors at each of the regional offices, will be able to provide this service. These vendors will be selected based on their’ demonstrated abilities to complete this assessment.

NHVR staff are also working on individual pilot programs to assist in expanding our supported employment services and vendor knowledge base.