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DBVI State Plan - 2018

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;

Report of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired
SRC Involvement in Planning and Evaluating Statewide Focus Group, Performance Data, and Customer Satisfaction Information. Introduction: The SRC meets in-person every other month and holds executive meetings on the alternate months. The entire SRC and DBVI staff meet for an all-day combined meeting each June.

Highlights of SRC meetings from April 2016 to February 2018

In April 2016, a member of the SRC from the Agency of Education gave a presentation about the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) process and how it will work for students on IEP and 504 plans to meet graduation requirements. Vermont high schools are now moving away from credit-based graduation and are now phasing-in the PLP process. The SRC and DBVI staff are hopeful that this will allow some instruction in the use of assistive technology to count towards meeting a graduation standard. It was also discussed that DBVI should create and archive webinars that shows students using assistive technology that can be shared with schools.

The last part of the agenda was led by the DBVI Director including a discussion about “strategies for employment.” The group discussed the Section 503 for federal contractors and schedule A requirements for hiring people with disabilities. The SRC also discussed connections with DOL. Rose from DOL was present and said that there will be many opportunities with federal initiatives for “apprenticeships.” She will provide information to the group.

In June 2016, DBVI and the SRC held a combined Meeting. The DBVI staff requested input about products under development by DBVI staff. One product was a series of marketing banners that show several DBVI consumers working at their jobs. This is an initiative to educate the public about the abilities of people who are blind or visually impaired. The SRC approved the prototypes that were then produced and currently used at many employment related events. The SRC also reviewed the results of the closure surveys that asked DBVI customers if they are Better Off as a result of services and if services had been delivered well.

The staff and SRC also discussed the following Results Based Accountability Research Agenda questions:

- High school Students (What connections can you help us make to meet the goals for HS students?)
- Working Age (What connections can you help us make to help people meet employment goals?)
- Policy Decision (Moving from 30 to 90 days for eligibility to IPE).

October 2016 began with a presentation about the successes of the summer Work Based Learning Experience for students called LEAP (Learn, Earn, and Prosper). This gave the SRC the opportunity to see a video of the students at work and to hear summaries and student success stories. Each student received weekly reports of their progress towards skills they will need in the workforce. The SRC had an opportunity to share ideas about potential businesses for future internship sites.

The next meeting was focused on a review of the closure survey results conducted annually by a neutral source. The SRC was pleased to learn that 89% of individuals closed felt that they did get the results they wanted from DBVI. The survey also indicated that 85% of the individuals closed felt that services were delivered well by DBVI. These results and other open-ended responses lead to meaningful discussions with the membership about the best ways to meet the needs of DBVI consumers related to employment. The biggest challenges are attitudes of employers about blindness and the lack of transportation options in our rural state.

At the February meeting, the SRC reviewed the accessible Client Assistance Program brochure and recording. CAP has representation on the SRC membership and requested assistance and feedback to make their materials accessible. There was also a presentation from the Vermont Family Network about statewide student focus groups about vocationally related needs. The SRC had many ideas about ways to include blind and visually impaired students in these discussions.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing the new WIOA Performance Measures. In April, the SRC brainstormed ideas about the best ways to collaborate with the Vermont Department of Labor. The DOL has many partners and potential employment related opportunities for DBVI participants. A strong partnership between DBVI and DOL is important. We also gave input and helped plan the June combined SRC and DBVI full-day meeting. This was followed by a discussion about planning the Town Meeting focus groups that will be part of the Statewide Needs Assessment later in the year.

The June meeting was a combined meeting of the SRC and DBVI staff. It included a presentation from each DBVI region about the realities of their caseload with stories to give examples of participant needs. Each DBVI region also discussed key initiatives to assist DBVI consumers with their employment goals. This was followed by a presentation from an SRC member about the assistive technology he uses to be successful in his job. This included a demonstration of the technology and explanation of the tasks he was able to complete at his employment. The afternoon was spent on a discussion about goals and status for WIOA, students, and employment. This included discussions about the current state and how to set goals for the new performance measures. The overall context was guided by Vermont's approach to continuous improvement using the Results-Based Accountability model. This directs us to answer the questions about how our consumers are "Better Off" and that services are Delivered Well."

In fall 2017, the SRC regrouped and began by reviewing the new WIOA Performance Measures. The SRC learned how the new AWARE case management program will capture most of this data to meet the new reporting requirements. The DBVI AWARE system went "live" in September 2017. We also reviewed upcoming goals for the year including a Town Meeting event and a statewide consumer satisfaction survey.

The December 2017 SRC meeting included a review and revision of DBVI Goals and Strategies.

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The membership had many ideas about connecting with partners including the Department of Labor and the Agency of Education. Ideas included continuation of DBVI initiated work experiences with employers. Current results include many individuals bridging from a work experience to employment. Other people learn new skills for their resume. It is also a great way to educate employers about the abilities and assistive technology used by people who are blind. There was also a strong recommendation to collaborate with the DOL work experience and on the-job training programs. DBVI was also encouraged to find employers who are interested in job carving opportunities where a person can bring their strengths to the employer. The Agency of Education representative also offered many tools available to staff about personalized learning plans and graduation requirements. The Chair of the Policy Committee also updated the SRC about WIOA related DBVI policy revisions that are in process. The meeting ended with a recommendation to have fewer strategies and keep them focused on the key goals.

The SRC dedicated the February 2018 meeting to updating the goals and strategies based on the CSNA. The meeting began with a review of the WIOA performance measures. Then the SRC discussed each of the 14 DBVI current strategies. After a detailed discussion about each of the strategies the group made a list of top priorities.

Some highlights from the strategy discussion include ideas about a comprehensive outreach strategy. The SRC believes that DBVI should make efforts to inform key organizations about the services that are available. This includes outreach to businesses, minority groups, and DOL partner programs. They also had ideas about ways to share DBVI planning resources by using some of the channels at AOE like the WIKI Transition page. This resource is well used by school staff and is a good way to share information with LEAs.

In addition to outreach and sharing information the SRC supports DBVI's ongoing efforts to create consumer-driven events and opportunities. The next event will be planned with consumer input and will be held in the fall. A new initiative is to create a listserv that connects clients to share ways they are using technology. There was also interest in creating podcasts that highlight some key technologies and examples of how people use technology to accomplish tasks at work or for independence.

There was an in-depth conversation about the best strategies to connect with the workforce system and American Job Centers and all DOL partners. The intent of the group is that there should be concrete steps and a plan to connect DBVI consumers to these programs and to have a referral process that keeps all partners involved rather than a hand-off to another organization. One topic that is part of every CSNA is transportation. The SRC is very interested in a new initiative at the VT Department of Transportation that connects travelers with all of the resources and potential rides in a given area. This is in beta form and is being designed for accessibility. It was decided to invite VTRANS to the SRC meeting in April to discuss the tool.

The meeting ended with a discussion about identifying the top strategies. They include:

- Partnering with all DOL—Implement a plan for staying connected.
- Pre-Employment Transition—Share the DBVI tools that can be used for student transition planning.
- Outreach—Implement a comprehensive plan that includes businesses, eye doctors, and other human service organizations.
- Technology—Create a listserv to connect DBVI consumers and the blind community.

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

DBVI Response to SRC Input:

• DBVI and the SRC worked collaboratively to review Statewide Assessment and update Goals and Priorities. • The SRC and DBVI agree that educating the public about blindness is very important. Two new success story videos were created and on the DBVI website www.dbvi.vermont.gov. The SRC gave ideas about how to proceed with success stories. • The SRC reviewed and gave input on the DBVI section of the statewide assessment, new goals and strategies, and WIOA Unified Plan.

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

DBVI agreed with all SRC recommendations.

j. Statewide Assessment

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

DBVI Comprehensive NEEDS ASSESSMENT FFY2019

1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those who are blind or visually impaired in Vermont.

Summary Outline of CSNA Methods, Results, Gaps, and Implications for State Plan The Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires each state to conduct a statewide needs assessment every three years. The current triennial needs assessment is statewide and jointly conducted by The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The activities for the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) were completed during FFY 2016 – February 2018. The following summary of the CSNA is being used to develop many of our goals and strategies for PY 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Introduction

The goals of this needs assessment are to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals in Vermont who are blind or visually impaired.

Methodology

Information gathering included the use of:

- Existing disability population statistics including the Cornell Study;
- Disability population estimates from available data including the American Foundation for the Blind;
- Population projections and economic forecasts from federal and state data; Department of Labor projections by state;
- Existing DBVI data, studies and experience; 911 data, type of service, cost, whether people currently served by DBVI are representative of the racial and ethnic minority distribution of people with disabilities within the state; data provided by CRPs; Counselor input;
- State level statistics from other federal programs; WIOA, IEP, 504, Social Security,
- State and local data and reports;

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- Stakeholder input: Surveys, focus groups, SRC meetings, interviews, Statewide Town Meetings, Customer—Centered Culture Focus Groups, and public hearings.
- Meetings and surveys with the statewide network of Teacher of the Visually Impaired.
- Statewide Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Survey conducted by Market Decisions—winter 2017.
- Review of Journal of Visual Impairment articles by DBVI staff.

Participants included DBVI Staff, State Rehabilitation Council, Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) Staff, and individuals who are blind or visually impaired from around the state. Dissemination plans included group meetings and individual interviews.

Results

Current Population Survey

Prevalence Rate (Disability at the Vermont Population Level):

The percentage of men and women, aged 18-64 who report a work limitation in Vermont from 1981 (8.9%) to 2014 (10.1%)

Labor Market Activity Rate:

The percentage of men and women, aged 18-64 with a work limitation in Vermont who worked more than 52 hours in the prior calendar year from 1981 (53%) to 2014 (24%).

Employment Rate:

The percentage of men and women, aged 18-64 with a work limitation employed in Vermont from 1981 (40.8%) to 2014 (17.6%).

*Von Schrader, S., Lee, C. G. (2017). Disability Statistics from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved from Cornell University Disability Statistics website: www.disabilitystatistics.org

2016 Disability Status Report--Vermont

American Community Survey

Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2016). 2016 Disability Status Report:

Vermont. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI). www.disabilitystatistics.org

Summary of Overall Vermont Data

Age--In 2016, the prevalence of disability in VT was:

- 14.3 percent for persons of all ages
- <1 percent for persons ages 4 and under
- 6.2 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
- 8.6 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
- 12.0 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
- 23.4 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 48.3 percent for persons ages 75+

Disability Type--In 2016, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in VT was:

- 2.3% reported a Visual Disability
- 4.4% reported a Hearing Disability
- 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 5.5% reported a Cognitive Disability

- 2.9% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 6.0% reported an Independent Living Disability

Gender--In 2016, 13.9 percent of females of all ages and 14.7 percent of males of all ages in VT reported a disability.

Hispanic/Latino--In 2016, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in VT was 7.9 percent.

Race--In VT in 2016, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 11.9 percent among Whites
- 9.7 percent among Black / African Americans
- <1 percent among Asians
- 46.7 percent among Native Americans
- 14.1 percent among persons of some other race(s)

Populations in Households in Vermont

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

<https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont> Ages

15 to 17=12,648

Ages 18 to 19=6,392

Ages 20=3,244

Ages 21=3,615

Ages 22 to 24=11,034

Number of Individuals who are minorities

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

Total population of Vermont= 625,741

White- 596,292

Two or More Races=10,753

Hispanic or Latino=9,208

Asian=7,947

Black or African=6,277

American Indian=2,207

Another Race=2,105

Three or More Races=610

Native Hawaiian=160

Summary of Visual Disability data in Vermont—American Community Survey: Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

Working Age Adults

DBVI estimates that there are approximately 7,100 Vermonters of working age (21-64) who are blind or severely visually impaired (meaning even with correction they are not able to easily read the newspaper). DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 5.3% of these individuals annually (293 in FFY17).

- Visual Disability Total= **14,100** (2.1% of 619,100 VT population)
- Ages 5 to 15= **100** (6.4% of 75,800)

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- Age 16 to 20= **80** (<1% of 44,000)
- Age 21 to 64= **7,100** (2% of 357,300)
- Age 65 to 74= **2,500** (3.6% of 68,500)
- Age 75 and Older= **3,400** (7.9% of 42,800)

Employment Rate

Employment rates of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

- In 2016, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 41.4 percent.
- In 2016, the employment rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 85.0 percent.
- The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with and without disabilities was 43.6 percentage points.

Gap--Employment Rate--Visual Disability

- The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with a visual disability (48.2%) and without disabilities (85%) was (36.8%) percentage points.
- This represents about 3,400 out of 7,100 working-age people with a visual disability who are employed.

Not Working but Actively Looking for Work

The percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont who are Not working but actively looking for work.

- In 2016 in VT, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 5.5 percent.
- In 2016 in VT, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 15.5 percent.
- The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with and without disabilities was 10 percentage points.

Gap--Not Working but Actively Looking for Work--Visual Disability

- The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with a visual disability (0.8%) and without disabilities (15.5%) was 15.42 percentage points.
- This represents about 296 people with a visual disability out of the 3,700 people with a visual disability who are working age not working but looking for work.

Working Full-Time/Full-Year

This section presents the percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities working full-time/full-year in Vermont.

- In 2016, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year in VT was 27.0 percent.
- In 2016, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities working full-time/full year in VT was 62.6 percent.
- The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with and without disabilities was 35.6 percentage points.

Working Full-Time/Full-Year: Gap--Visual Disability

- The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with a visual disability (24.8%) and without disabilities (62.6%) was 37.8 percentage points.
- This represents about 1,700 out of 7,100 people with a visual disability who are working Full-Time/Full-Year.

Annual Earnings

The median annual earnings of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities who work full-time/full-year in Vermont.

- In 2016, the median earnings of working-age people with disabilities who worked fulltime/full-year in VT was \$44,300.
- In 2016, the median earnings of working-age people without disabilities who worked fulltime/full-year in VT was \$44,500.
- The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with and without disabilities who worked full-time/full-year was \$200.

Gap--Annual Earning--Visual Disability - The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with a visual disability earned \$50,400 and people without a disability earned \$44,500 showing that people with a visual disability earned \$5,900 more annually than people without a disability.

*Caution: Estimates based on a very small sample size (less than 40 individuals).

Poverty

The poverty rates of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

- In 2016, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 21.2 percent.
- In 2016, the poverty rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 8.6 percent.
- The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with and without disabilities was 12.6 percentage points.

Gap—Poverty—Visual Disability

- The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with a visual disability (27.9%) and without disabilities (8.6%) was 19.3 percentage points
- This represents about 2,000 people with a visual disability out of the 7,100 people with a visual disability who are working age that live in poverty.

Education Level

- Less than High School=800 (11.9% of 7,100)
- A HS diploma or equivalent=3,600 (50.4% of 7,100)
- Some college/associates degree=1,500 (21.1% of 7,100)
- College bachelor's degree=1,200 (16.5% of 7,100)

Gap—Education Level--Visual Disability

- A majority of individuals with a visual disability do not get a college degree.

Information about DBVI agency resources:

DBVI currently has a total of 10 staff including four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and two Associate Counselors. DBVI collaborates with CRPs including The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and The Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation; and Supported Employment programs (i.e. Developmental Services Agencies and Mental Health programs).

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The type, percentage, and cost of services provided by CRPs to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are minorities.

- DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation to provide job development services for DBVI customers in all four regions of the state (\$60,000 annually).
- DBVI customers have access to supported employment services through an agreement with the General VR agency to access those programs as needed. In 2017, 8 DBVI customers participated in supported employment programs.
- DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for Low Vision, Rehabilitation Teaching, and Orientation and Mobility services (\$175,000 annually).

Customer Satisfaction Data—Key Findings and Discussion

Statewide Survey

The survey instrument for this research was developed jointly between the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Market Decisions Research. It is based on question topics that Market Decisions Research has used in conducting satisfaction research among Vocational Rehabilitation consumers in six states. The goal of this research was to provide an accurate assessment of the views of consumers that could be used to assess satisfaction with services with VT DBVI overall. The target population for this research consisted of all consumers with open and closed cases.

Goals:

- The Customer Quality Assurance Survey and Needs Assessment is designed to allow customers to provide feedback about the services they have received.
- The survey provides a tool to measure satisfaction with the agency and the services provided.
- The survey is designed to gather information to allow quality improvements.
- This administration allows comparisons to the 2003, 2011, and 2015 research and the opportunity to see trends in customer satisfaction.

Executive Summary

Consumer Core Metrics:

- Overall Satisfaction and Expectations: 82
- Experience with Services Provided by DBVI: 83
- Experience with DBVI Staff and Counselors: 93
- Communications with DBVI Staff: 88
- Consumer Control and Involvement: 86
- Outcomes and Meeting Goals: 85
- Ease of the Application Process for DBVI Services: 88
- Accessibility of the DBVI Office: 87
- Satisfaction with Current Employment: 85
- Recommend VT DBVI: 98
- Experience Problems with VT DBVI: 89

New Skills and Knowledge

- The most commonly received service from VT DBVI was adaptive equipment (67%). This was also the service consumers most frequently found most helpful (45%)
- The most well-known services offered in other places that consumers thought VT DBVI needs is additional training opportunities.

- 92% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of services available.
- 85% of consumers think DBVI delivers services to them well.
- 89% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of service providers.
- 90% of consumers are satisfied with their choice of a vocational goal.
- 88% of consumers are satisfied with the information they have been given about the choices they have.

Attitudes and Opinions

- 92% of consumers are satisfied with VT DBVI's program overall.
- 94% of consumers are satisfied with their involvement in their DBVI experience.
- 11% of consumers experienced some problem with DBVI or the services provided to them.
- The problems most commonly being experienced are not receiving employment (37%) and not receiving help in reaching plan or goals (29%).
Among those experiencing problems with DBVI or the services provided, 59% indicate that DBVI worked to resolve those problems.
- The most common sources of improvement offered by consumers is more training (14%) and increases in staff (8%).
- The most commonly sought need to address is for more transportation and drivers for all of consumers' needs.
- Consumers are most likely to place the blame for unmet needs on funding issues (28%).
- Most DBVI consumers believe that the unmet needs could be solved by providing more staff (23%) or better information being made publicly available (21%).

New Behaviors and Circumstances

- 81% of consumers agree that the DBVI services they received helped or will help them become more financially independent.
- 88% of consumers feel that the DBVI services they received helped them or will help them become more independent, in general.
- 84% of consumers feel the DBVI staff helped or will help them reach their job goal.
- The new skills consumers are most likely to report are computer and technology use skills (23%).
- The most commonly reported assistive technology skills learned are computer/technology skills (22%).
- 54% of consumers are working full or part time.
- The service that working DBVI consumers are most likely to believe helped them get or keep their job was job coaching and support (28%).
- Asked what worked best in helping them prepare for their job, consumers are most likely to say adaptive equipment and counseling.
- 91% of working consumers are satisfied with their current job.
- Jobs in education are most in demand among DBVI consumers not currently employed (15%).
- Among those not working, help in finding a job (3%) is the most commonly reported service consumers need and where not receiving.

Treatment by VT DBVI

- 94% of consumers feel the staff of DBVI helped or is helping them achieve their DBVI goal.

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- Almost all (91%) consumers report that the DBVI office is accessible for someone with their type of disability.
- Nearly all consumers (95%) feel the DBVI staff treats them with dignity and respect.

Actions Meeting Standards

- 83% of consumers got the results they wanted from DBVI.
- 92% of consumers felt that the services provided by VT DBVI met their expectations.
- 90% of consumers felt that the services they received from VT DBVI compared well to their ideal program.
- 98% of consumers would tell their friends with disabilities to go to the DBVI program for help.
- 93% of consumers agree that they are better off as a result of the services received from DBVI.

Timeliness of Action

92% of consumers are satisfied with how long it took their counselor to answer questions and address concerns.

- 95% of consumers indicate that it is easy to contact their DBVI counselor.
- 91% of consumers feel that services are provided as promptly as necessary.

Other Items

- 96% of consumers found it easy to complete an application for DBVI services.
- 64% of consumers have been informed they could address problems with Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and that they could address it with the Client Assistance Program.

Key Findings

Summary

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that a large majority of consumers are satisfied with the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), satisfied with the services they receive, and only a small fraction have experienced any problems. This reaffirms the findings from prior studies conducted between 2003 and 2015.

The staff of DBVI is viewed as helpful and interested in meeting the needs of their consumers. Staff effectively communicates with their consumers and staff also engage with their consumers during the process. Staff listen to consumers when determining goals and the large majority of consumers indicate that DBVI provided the necessary assistance to help them achieve their goals.

Based upon the views and attitudes of the large majority of consumers, the survey results did not identify any major problems with the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired or the services it provides.

Looking at the positive highlights, the vast majority of consumers are positive about:

- Their overall experience
- Believe that DBVI met their expectations
- Have a positive experience with the services provided by DBVI
- Have a positive experience with DBVI staff and counselors
- Feel they are part of the process in setting goals • Have positive outcomes, and
- Nearly universally recommend DBVI to others.

While positive, the survey results do show a slight drop from the 2015 survey. The declines observed are small but occurred across nearly all metrics. This suggests there are factors having a slight negative impact consumer experience. In reviewing consumer feedback, the most commonly mentioned issues or concerns are in the areas of:

- Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors
- Difficulties with paperwork and forms, needing help in completing forms, needing alternate formats
- Difficulties in finding employment, few job options
- Waiting to receive services, have not received services
- Needing more support or services, having to fight to obtain services, needing more guidance

Pre—Employment Transition Skills Planning

Includes:

Statewide Survey of all Teacher of the Visually Impaired

- Statewide survey sent to all students and families.
- Data-Mapping of Child Count data.
- Mailing to all special education and 504 administrators
- Calculation of current Pre-ETS Expenditures and Forecasting of future needs.

Statewide Survey of all Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Vermont--Survey open from November 2017 through December 2017.

What needs do your students have in job exploration counseling?

Most Popular Responses:

- Exposure to jobs in their community
- Receiving hands on experience as to how jobs are performed
- Meeting other employed adults with similar impairments

Key Answers:

- “Knowledge of actual jobs, the opportunity to "see" (hands on) how jobs are performed, the opportunity to understand how assistive tech and strategies can allow them to do jobs successfully. Meeting other adults with visual impairments who are working is also helpful”
In your experience, what skills do students need to be prepared for work experiences?

Most Common Responses:

- Social Skills (How to ask questions, making friends, etiquette, grooming etc.)
- Personal Communication skills
- Time management
- Technology
- Lots of range of answers

Key Answers:

- “Time job shadowing with hands on experience... Social skills, constructive criticism, making friends, etiquette, grooming, problem solving (not waiting for others to step in), assertiveness, transportation options, assistive technology, handling downtime appropriately, annual resume writing and updates. Understanding and identifying the list of job skills needed within each job.”

How are your students' strengths and weaknesses currently assessed in the area of work-based learning?

Most Common Responses:

- Skill Inventory Checklist / Job Readiness Checklist
- Observation / Evaluation of students by teacher and employer

Key Answers:

- “We were just given a readiness list, but other lists are also out there in the areas of independent living, social skills, technology, etc. APH has a book on assessment and goals toward transitioning students successfully as well. I currently have students in middle school and under, and I have not been using a formal list with my current students. I definitely need to be thinking more about this with my middle schoolers though it really starts in the younger years with exposure and experiences.”

What would help your students learn more about post-secondary options? Is there anything DBVI could do to help?

Most Common Responses:

Have students meet with TVI and DBVI staff to discuss options

- Have DBVI organize college visits and gatherings with current college students
- Connect with families
- Put together overnight experiences like LEAP, but held more often and for high school students only

Key Answers:

- “What would be helpful is if DBVI put together a series of overnight experiences - like the leap retreat weekends but even quicker, and more often for students in 10-12 grade. Small but frequent experiences where our students could get together more frequently while being exposed to work experiences - like an overnight where all the 10-12 graders then go and do different job shadows, and then get together in 8 weeks and switch job shadows, and learn the routes, be exposed to different access tools, spend time socializing, and then using social skills at the job sites. Some jobs could be a professor at UVM, various food service employees, computer programmers, staff at Echo museum, financial industry, social work organization, etc.”

What skills do your students need to be prepared for post-secondary education?

Most Common Responses:

- Organization
- Daily living skills
- Technology
- Advocacy Skills Key Answers:
- “The same ones as regular students plus advocacy, exposure to applications and how to find resources on line to assist them. The opportunity to practice some problem-solving situations ahead of time.”

What do your students need to get ready for employment?

Most Common Responses:

- Advocacy Opportunities
- Social skills
- Professional skills (Interviewing, dressing for work, office skills etc.)
- Confidence

Key Answers:

- “Opportunities to perform jobs. Training around how to go about getting the training necessary to obtain a paying job in the community, communication skills training, conversational skills training, personal care skills training, etc.”

What job readiness skills do you think your students need to succeed in the workplace?

Most Common Responses:

- Often, people referred back to their answers from previous question

Do your students receive the help needed to advocate for themselves? Why or why not?

Most Common Responses:

- Most respondents indicated that their students receive some advocacy training or are made aware of some program available. The issue is having the students take advantage of said programs or continuing their training through high school.

Key Answers:

“Yes, they need help to advocate for themselves. "Self Determination" is one of the 9 Expanded Core Curriculum bullets. It takes a village, most students come from overprotective and/or dysfunctional families, so they depend on the school staff and outside sources to help guide them.”

Is there anything you would like to see DBVI do with self-advocacy services?

Most Common Responses:

- Educating Parents, form a parents group
- Work with students and parents directly
- Create a progress checklist
- Run workshops

What services have been successful for your students? Why?

Most Common Responses:

- Camps, get togethers
- CCS, Howard, LEAP, HAPI
- Job placement services
- Work experiences and assistive technology consultations.

Key Answers:

- “The arrangement of work experiences, and assistive technology consultations have been beneficial for several of my students. Direct engagement with students outside of the school setting has also been instrumental in moving students forward with their transition planning.”

Where are there gaps in services?

Most Common Responses:

- Inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students
- Opportunities to get together across the school year
- Persistence of being in contact with school-based personnel
- Not many outlets for real job experience
- Funding for personal transportation
- Time, not enough time to do everything
- Assistive Technology
- Daily living skill services

Key Answers:

- “Time. We need to identify transition specific objectives in the IEPs or more transition specific objectives per school year. 24 hours is a day is not long enough. Students with a VI need an extra 13th year of schooling in most of the 9 Expanded Core Curriculum areas”
- “Based on conversations I have had with parents the most challenging thing seems to be the inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students who need extra support in the community or at work”
- “There are certainly no obvious caps and services. However, funding for personal transportation expenses and access to efficient transportation remains a challenge in our largely rural community.”
- “I think DLS instruction beyond what a TVI is able to do could start even earlier.”

Statewide Survey of Families

In fall 2017 DBVI sent a survey to all visually impaired students and families in high school. The questions included their needs for the 5-core Pre-ETS activities. These results helped DBVI with outreach to all individuals including those who are underrepresented or minorities. The survey also included a letter that explains DBVI intent to assist students with career planning and finding work experiences. It also described the summer work experience LEAP program and school year retreats and workshops.

Statewide Focus Group Meeting (Included DBVI consumers and several SRC Members). In January 2018 DBVI held a statewide focus group as part of the CSNA. The focus group included representation from all regions of the state. The event had two main objectives. First, to ask participants “What is working well and what else is needed to help people who are blind or visually impaired reach their employment and independence goals?” The other goal was to have an in-depth opportunity for each participant to share with the group the IOS apps that are most useful for their employment and independence.

DBVI Questions and Notes

As you think about employment, what can you think of that DBVI can do to help with that?

- Tech training
- The ability to spend more time with individuals to do something consistent over a period of time and be proficient with certain skills
- People get their feet wet, but they don’t really remember when they are seeking employment
- There is room for more training
- As technology gets better, people need to become more informed
- Quarterly Newsletter
- This has been updated
- This is what’s new
- Tech Listserv (E-mail and contribute to constantly and peer to peer)
- Podcasting
- VPR has been teaching people about podcasts
- DBVI needs to find a way to have the trainers become more adept at being innovative within a person’s domain for possible low-tech solutions.
- Using the things around them to solve a problem
- Don’t constantly throw technology at something
- Try to make things easier to use without always having to pull up an app
- Have DBVI find some training or encouragement for instructors to learn more ways in helping people find their own solutions
- Increase tactile knowledge and stuff like that
- Adapting to what you have
- Perkins School Program to Learn More Adaptive Knowledge

How do we share low tech solutions?

- Listserv Idea
- Peer to Peer Connecting
- It’s hard for people to find a way to get where they need to be
- “There’s a canyon between me and a job”
- I want to meet people who can help me

What DBVI can do about outreach?

Need to advertise more

- Department of Human Resources

How can DBVI reach underserved populations?

- Transportation
- No actual job to go to necessarily
- WIOA could change this
- Radio PSAs
- Podcast
- VABVI (Video Clips “How I Do It”) • Contact the legislator for more BEP sites.
- Get more BEP training sites in the state.
- More connection with Department of Labor contacts
- A launching place for subcommittees and meetings
- Getting connected with other entities and organizations

Pre-Employment Survey of Students who participated in the Summer 2017 LEAP Work Experience Program

What do you think will help you the most with reaching your employment goals?

- More experience in the field that I want and great organization skills.
- Work experience, positive attitude.
- Learning how to make and build a better resume than what I already have.
- I think working closely with my DBVI counselor and being as open and honest as possible with employers in regard to my disability and possible limitations.
- I think going to college would help me reach my employment goals, so I can figure out exactly what my employment goals are.
- Learning more about Assistive Technology.
- Professional development Friday's really helped me with interview skills and how to format my resume.
- I think more individualized training, particularly in technology (working with JAWS).
- Having a reliable list of references so that they can give a good recommendation for jobs that I may be applying to in the future.
- Being more responsible and getting the accommodations I will need will help me be successful.
- Finding better ways to access accommodations in the work place - both in tools to use and ways to advocate.
- Making good contacts/networking. I was able to meet someone (Heather B) who may be able to help me get into the job field that I want to go into. I want to learn from people like her.
- Researching and making sure I have the necessary skills needed for the certain job. Different accommodations and making sure I'm aware of the different services I receive.
- I think practicing interviews and learning about interviews will help me in the future. What are your needs in relation to your employment goals?
- Better public speaking skills, better organization skills, and learning about other music.
- Leadership skills. Working skills.

I need to work on not influencing people around me and I need to become a better role model.

- My needs really depend on the job and expectations of me in that particular position. I need to be allowed to use all assistive technology in the workplace and often require extra time and patience in order to complete certain tasks, particularly if it involves a lot of reading or computer work.
- I need to learn how to budget my money well. I also need help on my time management skills.
- Getting more comfortable with using Assistive Technology (I.e. Voiceover on Mac).
- I need support and good accommodations from the future employer.
- I think I am lacking in technology training, or the fact that I haven't stepped completely out of my comfort zone yet, in terms of being more independent and proactive.
- I might need extra time to learn what to do at a new job, in order to perform well.
- I'll need a job coach for a little bit.
- I need to live in an area where there are more entry-level positions for people under 18.
- I will need some adaptive equipment to get into the medical field. I will also need to learn computer program to help me succeed.
- Making accommodations and making sure the employer knows that I have different needs compared to sighted person. I will need to use my phone in order to read certain things, such as labels and or different documents.
- My needs are accessible technology and for my employers to know my different needs. I will also need more training on how to take public transportation.

What do you feel is getting in the way of reaching your employment goals?

- More practice with public speaking.
- I feel as though I'm the only one standing in the way of my goals, but that can be said for all life. I can be a difficult person to change and I need to learn the changes the best thing in some cases.
- Outside of LEAP, I have not been employed. I think my biggest obstacle currently is my lack of experience in the workforce, very evident on my short resume.
- I think a couple things are procrastination and not having enough motivation are two of them.
- My vision is a barrier because of other peoples' perceptions and how they decide to interpret my abilities.
- Trying to explain my disability to some employers because I think a lot of employers may think of us as a liability.
- Not having a college education, and not knowing how to get a job on my own because I need assistance for that.
- Age is getting in the way of getting a job (they say I must be 18 or older) and also disability discrimination in general.
- People opinions of the blind community is getting in the way. I hear a lot "you can't do that" or "no one wants a blind nurse." I feel that people with visual impairments are thought of as less capable.
- I can't think of anything that's getting in the way because I haven't applied to any jobs, and I'm still in high school. Transportation is the only thing I can think of as being an issue but that's not anything I can't work around.

My learning disability and the fact that I take longer to grasp information gets in the way of me reaching my employment goals.

Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness JVIB Articles

The highlights of previously cited in CSNA articles are cited here because they are still relevant. Please refer to the previous CSNA for a more complete summary. Several JVIB articles are new and include more complete summaries below.

The previous CSNA (FFY 15) referenced several Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB) article that have identified several “Needs” of people who are blind or visually impaired related to students and employment. Here are some of the main highlights:

Transportation:

- The most frequently cited barriers for visually impaired individuals regarding transportation are: the availability of public transportation, travel time, cost, safety issues, and stress associated with transportation.
- Engage clients in problem-solving discussions to generate transportation options; sharing of client success stories and innovative strategies implemented to overcome transportation barriers.
- In an effort to continue to support consumers around transportation issues DBVI could survey consumers to obtain information on effective transportation solutions and share with other consumers. Showcase success stories on creative transportation solutions.
- Participating in efforts to improve the overall transportation system.
- Providing consumer’s transportation expenses for at least 60 days after the customers are employed.
- Encouraging customers to relocate (when needed) and network with co-workers and community agencies to hire drivers.
- Encouraging customers to car pool, meet somebody, post messages on bulletin boards, run an ad in the newspaper and try to find somebody in community.

Employer Attitudes/Educating the Public:

- Disability awareness training and assistive technology were two of the top five strategies identified by employers that would be helpful in hiring persons with disabilities.
- There are multiple theories about how attitudes are formed and changed, and many of them propose a link between knowledge and attitudes.
- What level of knowledge do employers have about how someone who is blind or visually impaired can perform specific job functions (that is, knowledge about job accommodations or available assistive technology)?
- Do employers know where to seek help with accommodating someone who is blind or visually impaired?
- In an employer survey a majority of managers mistakenly believed there were few jobs in their organizations that visually impaired people could successfully perform. They also thought it was more expensive to hire someone with impaired vision compared to someone without a disability. The majority of managers made it a lower priority to recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities than to recruit, train, and retain executives, senior managers, young employees, and minorities.

- Involving the employer in advocating for the creation, modification, or expansion of transportation programs. Systems change when employers also advocate for more transportation options. Providing education to employers and human resources professionals about job accommodations, including where to find additional information, is necessary and would be an appropriate strategy to use when interacting with employers.
- Encouraging job seekers to volunteer information about how they perform specific activities and their transportation options. Answering the unasked question is important because what the employer is imagining probably is not accurate.
- Educating employers about visual impairment and how it affects functioning.
- Creating opportunities for increased contact between employers and persons who are visually impaired.
- Sharing testimonials and newspaper articles of success stories.
- Doing presentations each month to describe the whole process and the benefits of hiring a blind person.
- Offering training about the Americans with Disabilities Act to employers.
- Providing community education days.
- Facilitating educational activities particularly targeted for October because it is National Disability Awareness Month.
- Taking tours and publicly recognizing businesses that employ visually impaired persons.
- Facilitating employer mentoring programs and breakfast meetings.
- Developing long-term relationships with employers, particularly those with large businesses.
- Sharing success stories about competent blind people on the job and publicize them in many ways. Include consumer organizations in these efforts.

Soft Skills/Interviewing Skills

- Making sure everyone has practice interviews, so the person is ready.
- Making sure DBVI customers are competent in discussing their skills, qualifications, and visual impairment with employers.

Assistive Technology

- Access to assistive technology
- Providing high-quality training in adaptive skills and assistive technology are vital aspects of preparation for employment.

Progressive Employment

- The need for a transitional period to full-time employment during which they engage in progressive employment including volunteer work, part-time work, work experiences, or on-the-job training.
- Providing on-the-job training programs and job coaches to promote positive integration into the workplace.
- Finding ways to keep valued older employees.

Benefits Counseling/Guidance

- Fear of losing benefits.

Peer Support/Job Clubs

- Creating job clubs for promoting appropriate work behavior and increasing knowledge about employment options.

- Promoting peer support as a powerful force in assisting DBVI customers through the training and employment process.

Adjustment to Blindness

- Individual adjustment to blindness

Additional recent JVIB articles relating to “Needs” of Blind or Visually Impaired related to Employment include:

Cmar, J. L. (2015). Orientation and Mobility Skills and Outcome Expectations as Predictors of Employment for Young Adults with Visual Impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 109(2), 95–106.

- Cmar analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study to assess the relationship between orientation and mobility, post-secondary education, and employment for persons who are blind and visually impaired. The study revealed that, “...youths with high ratings on community travel skills were significantly more likely to be employed up to six years post– high school,” (p. 102). The author concluded that their results, “...suggest that independently traveling to places outside the home, using public transportation, and arranging airplane or train trips are predictive of later employment for adolescents with visual impairments. These experiences can be facilitated through avenues such as off-campus O&M [Orientation and Mobility] instruction, transition programs, and summer programs, and can be further supported by family involvement,” (p. 103).

Crudden, A. (2015). Transportation issues: perspectives of orientation and mobility providers. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 109(6), 457–468.

- Crudden conducted an exploratory study of orientation and mobility providers’ perceptions of transportation issues facing blind and visually impaired individuals. The author found that transportation is a major barrier for people who are blind and visually impaired, especially in terms of employment. “Participants unanimously agreed that transportation has a significant negative impact on the employment of persons who are visually impaired,” (p. 461).

Crudden, A., Antonelli, K., & O’Mally, J. (2017). A Customized Transportation Intervention for Persons with Visual Impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 111(4), 341–353.

- Crudden et al. evaluated a customized transportation intervention program for people who are blind or visually impaired. The study consisted of a pretest and posttest of participants’ social problem-solving skills, transportation self-efficacy, and transportation knowledge. Participants were measured against a comparison group of blind and visually impaired persons not undergoing the intervention. The authors found that, “The intervention group scored higher than the comparison group on all measures at posttest, and trends in all cases showed that the intervention group improved more from pretest to posttest than the comparison group,” (p. 350) and concluded that, “These results lend support to the necessity and benefit of engaging consumers in structured transportation planning discussions and activities,” (p. 351).

Crudden, A., McDonnell, M. C., & Hierholzer, A. (2015). Transportation: an electronic survey of persons who are blind or have low vision. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 109(6), 445.

- Crudden et al. conducted a nationwide survey of blind and visually impaired persons around issues related to transportation. Survey respondents did not identify transportation as a primary barrier to employment. However, the authors note: "... just over half of the persons who described themselves as self-employed, unemployed, retired, students, or volunteers reported that lack of transportation limited their participation in employment. More than one third of participants reported having turned down jobs because of transportation concerns," (p. 452). The authors concluded that while transportation remains a major barrier to employment for blind and visually impaired persons, the concern within that community is with the obstacles transportation creates for leisure, daily living, and community engagement.

Ehn, M., Möller, K., Danermark, B., & Möller, C. (2016). The Relationship Between Work and Health in Persons with Usher Syndrome Type 2. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 110(4), 233–244.

- Ehn et al. investigated work and health in people with dual sensory loss through Usher syndrome. Results showed that individuals with Ushers syndrome who were employed enjoyed significantly better health than those who were in receipt of disability assistance funds. The authors concluded that, "...there is a need for early interventions supporting persons with USH2 [Ushers syndrome] by means of vocational training and other work promoting activities instead of granting them a disability pension, since in the long-term employment may make the difference between good and bad psychological health," (p. 242).

Hierholzer, A. C., & Bybee, J. (2017). Working with Randolph-Sheppard Entrepreneurs Who Are Deafblind: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 111(1), 61–71.

- Hierholzer and Bybee examined challenges to deafblind entrepreneurs and staff involved with the Randolph-Sheppard Enterprise Program. The authors conducted interviews with staff and deafblind entrepreneurs. Their findings suggest that the largest challenge to deafblind entrepreneurs was communication with customers. The authors conclude that, "Although communication is a challenge, neither deafblind entrepreneurs nor BEP [Business Enterprise Program] staff view communication challenges as insurmountable barriers. Individuals with deaf blindness can succeed as BEP entrepreneurs if they are provided with updated technology, notify customers about the best ways to communicate with them, and keep a positive, upbeat attitude when interacting with customers," (p. 70).

Högner, N. (2015). Psychological stress in people with dual sensory impairment through Usher syndrome type II. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 109(3), 185–197.

- Högner evaluated questionnaire responses to investigate psychological stress in people with dual sensory loss through Usher syndrome. Their findings indicated that respondents had high levels of stress and identified orientation and mobility, chronic worry, and social isolation as the leading factors in the development of stress. Högner concluded that, "...it is important to offer services to people with USH [Usher syndrome] that enable them to participate in society," (p. 195). Further, the author highlighted the importance of employment rehabilitation for people with Usher syndrome.

McDonnall, M. C., Crudden, A., LeJeune, B. J., Steverson, A., & O'Donnell, N. (2016). Needs and Challenges of Seniors with Combined Hearing and Vision Loss. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 110(6), 399–411.

- McDonnall et al. surveyed seniors with combined hearing and vision loss to identify needs and challenges. The survey demonstrated that transportation, technology training, assistance with errands, and improved communications were the top reported needs for seniors with dual sensory loss. Needs for early onset of one or both sensory losses focused on transportation and use of technology. The authors emphasized the importance of technology training for seniors with dual sensory loss as it can, "...contribute to overall improved quality of life, since it has the potential to improve communication options and reduce feelings of isolation," (p. 399).

O'Mally, J., & Antonelli, K. (2016). The Effect of Career Mentoring on Employment Outcomes for College Students Who Are Legally Blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 110(5), 295–307.

- O'Mally and Antonelli conducted a nationwide longitudinal study to evaluate career mentoring outcomes for blind college students. Their findings demonstrated that, "Students working with mentors were significantly more assertive in job hunting and showed trends in improvement for job-seeking self-efficacy and career adaptability. Despite these positive trends, however, the mentoring relationship did not have a significant influence on employment rates and job satisfaction," (p. 303). The authors conclude, "Our results indicate that mentor relationships are effective in improving job seeking assertiveness for legally blind college students. Trends indicated that improvement may also occur in areas of self-efficacy and career adaptability and, perhaps with a longer mentoring period, significant gains would be seen in these areas as well," (p. 304).

O'Mally, J., & Steverson, A. (2017). Reflections on Developing an Employment Mentoring Program for College Students Who Are Blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 111(3), 271–276.

- O'Mally and Steverson (2017) reported on an employment mentoring program for blind college students. The program involved matching mentors and mentees to facilitate job shadowing, networking, job-seeking skills, and finding transportation. The authors found that this type of program, "...demonstrates the desire among students with visual impairments and professionals to work with others in pursuing employment," (p. 275). O'Mally and Steverson conclude that future mentoring programs might benefit from, "...broadening eligibility to include college students of nontraditional ages and those who are in the earlier stages of post-secondary education," (p. 275). Further, the authors highlight the need for service providers to encourage students to pursue these types of opportunities and emphasize the development of, "...realistic views of securing employment," (p. 275).

Victor, C. M., Thacker, L. R., Gary, K. W., Pawluk, D. T. V., & Copolillo, A. (2017). Workplace Discrimination and Visual Impairment: A Comparison of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Charges and Resolutions Under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 111(5), 475–482.

- Victor et al. analyzed workplace discrimination cases concerning persons who are blind or visually impaired. Several trends were identified in these cases, including: a decrease in job acquisition charges, an increase in job satisfaction charges, and an increase in job retention charges. The authors note: "Workplace discrimination experiences were most prevalent with aspects regarding job satisfaction, which includes issues with reasonable accommodations," (p. 480). The authors highlight the need for vocational rehabilitations service providers, "...to be aware of and knowledgeable about assistive technology, adaptive communication,

and independent living devices that could supplement or enhance the capabilities of individuals to perform essential job functions needed for successful employment,” (p. 480). Further, the authors urge vocational rehabilitation providers to be knowledgeable of federal and state laws governing workplace discrimination and to provide one-on-one support to blind and visually impaired professionals throughout the employment process.

A. With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; nearly all DBVI consumers are considered to have a most significant disability. The CSNA included many of these individuals in focus groups, interviews, and customer satisfaction surveys to determine their employment needs. The findings from all of these assessment methods plus a review of the JVIB research show some major categories of need. They include needs for training and work experiences that lead to good jobs, adaptive skills training, and assistive technology computer training. There is also a significant need to educate employers about the abilities of people who are blind.

DBVI has strong partnerships for individuals who need supported employment. Eligible consumers can access programs through the Developmental Services Agencies. DBVI strives to have all individuals participate in trial work experiences using supported employment when appropriate.

B. Who are minorities;

The CSNA assessment data show the Vermont demographics. It shows that people are spread throughout our rural state and are not necessarily living in certain communities. The exception is Burlington which has the most diverse population in Vermont. This data guides our outreach efforts and indicates a need for DBVI to outreach to all communities. The most challenging region for outreach is the Northeast Kingdom which is very rural. The CSNA indicated a need to do more public outreach on the radio using a Public Service Announcement across the state. The DBVI Director is also a member of the Agency of Humans Services Committee to make sure the agency is accessible to all individuals. Several initiatives of the group include sharing resources about translation services and connections with community agencies that assist diverse groups. Some specific needs and strategies include:

- Interpretation and Translation services available to all AHS staff.
- Tools for working with LEP clients
- Specialized training for communicating across cultures, and; communicating effectively through an interpreter.

The key service needs for reaching out to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are minorities (Strategies for Reaching Out to Minority Individuals with Disabilities—By Fabricio E. Balcazar, Ph.D., Principal Investigator Developing the Capacity of Minority Communities to Promote the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-University of Illinois at Chicago) are:

- Making sure your agency can provide the services they need.
- Utilizing a diverse research team or diverse staff to deliver services to the target population.
- Building personal relationships with members of the target community.
- Becoming a part of the local network.
- Building consumers’ strengths.

- Being persistent and do not let consumers go when they fail to comply.
- Being willing to listen. If we want to reach out, we should be able and willing to listen.
- Utilizing members of the target community in outreach efforts.
- Meeting people where they are instead of waiting for them to come to you.
- Utilizing multiple channels of communication to disseminate information in the target community.

C. Who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

The CSNA data shows 3 categories of individuals who are unserved or underserved. Vermont is the 2nd oldest average age population in the country. Many of these older individuals desire to stay in the workforce to meet their financial needs. Losing vision can be part of the aging process and this becomes a major adjustment and often causes feelings of loss and denial. DBVI is available help these individuals stay in the workforce as they learn new skills to adapt to their vision loss.

The data also shows that individuals who are deaf-blind have unique and specific needs due to their dual sensory impairment. Services like Support Service Providers are helpful to access the community and lesson isolation. There are very few professionals in the country who can teach adaptive blindness skills like Orientation and Mobility who can also communicate using tactile sign. There is a need to build more of that capacity in Vermont. The ICANCONNECT program is beginning to grow in New England and Perkins is providing important technology through that program. There is a need to build strong partnerships with the Helen Keller National Center who can provide specialized training for staff and services for deaf-blind individuals.

The greatest underserved population is in the Northeast Kingdom of the state. This is very rural and has very few jobs. DBVI encourages youth in this area of the state to participate in the LEAP summer residential work experience program and the residential school year retreats so they can participate in job readiness training and work experiences in an area where there are more work opportunities.

The AHS website resource includes:

<https://inside.vermont.gov/agency/AHSIntra/LEP/Pages/LEP.aspx> •

Interpretation and Translation service available to all AHS staff.

- Tools for working with LEP clients
- Specialized training for communicating across cultures, and; communicating effectively through an interpreter.
- DBVI data shows a need to increase the percentage of transition age students that receive services.

Suggestions in Assume Nothing! —A Monograph from the 38th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues to Address Underserved Populations, Including Individuals Who Are Deaf-Blind Rehabilitation Services Administration U.S. Department of Education

- Cultural training for staff from consultants on DB culture and someone from Alliance of Africans Living in Vermont or Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program for ethnic minorities. DBVI needs to truly understand the beliefs and values about work and “independence” and disability held by people from these cultures. (pages 23 & 28)
- Get a DB person or a person of color on the SRC (top of page 17)

- Lack of services for DB people. Someone in the state should provide DB leadership for services. (p 31)
- Initiate a DB targeted “town hall meeting” (p 33)
- Create a partnership with VR to assist individuals who are deaf-blind seeking employment. Assign specific staff to take the lead for underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Add cultural humility/ cultural competency training
- Consider outreach for All strategies in each region.

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

WIOA has been a great way to bring together all of the partners of the American Job Centers. Workgroups including all of the partners have met to determine the priorities and best ways to make the workforce programs available.

The workgroup has identified the following needs.

- Maximize access to the workforce development system through seamless coordination and communication among the different partners to provide a quality, consistent experience for all Vermonters.
- The workforce development system will prioritize pathways to livable wage employment for all Vermonters, with an increased focus on low income Vermonters.
- Strengthen the Vermont economy by increasing the number of Vermont women employed in the skilled trades, STEM fields, advanced manufacturing and other Vermont priority sectors.
- Ensure all students who graduate from high school are college ready, career ready, or both; increase the number of Vermonters who pursue and complete post-secondary education, training and career opportunities with the education and specific skills necessary to keep Vermonters competitive in the economic sectors critical to the Vermont economy.
- Align the workforce development system to the needs of employers, as well as job seekers, through systematic and ongoing engagement and partnership.

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

The research and feedback from students and families identify work experiences, work readiness, and assistive technology skills as most helpful for future employment success. When students have the opportunity for several work experiences during high school they learn what types of jobs they like and don't like. They also learn transferable skills they can use for future jobs. The challenge for Vermont students is that they have very limited opportunities for these work experiences in their small rural town. Ten years ago, DBVI created a strategy to meet that need. It was necessary to create a summer residential experience for students from across the state to live in a larger community where there is a wide variety of work experience jobs available. The program has expanded and now includes weekend retreats during the school year. These retreats focus on self-advocacy and job readiness training. Most recently all LEAP activities are including some aspect of assistive technology that is built into the curriculum. Proficiency with technology is also a predictor of future employment success. DBVI counselors have identified the need for students to have better technology skills for the workplace. For that reason, DBVI

developed and assessment tool to evaluate technology skills. This information can then be used by schools and DBVI staff to create opportunities to improve these skills before college, vocational training, or employment.

Students also learn important self-advocacy skills and independent living skills at the LEAP work experiences and job readiness retreats which are also strong predictors and essential for future employment success.

For students who do not choose to participate in summer LEAP or school year retreats, DBVI staff work with several partners to establish work experiences in a students' local community. In some situations, a DBVI Counselor can make connections with the school-based employment specialist to assist a student or connect them with employment related workshops and other school-based activities. It is the intent of DBVI to make sure all visually impaired students have the opportunity for multiple work experiences before the exit high school.

The combination of these strategies and DBVI Counselor involvement makes it possible for Vermont students to access the 5-core Pre-ETS as identified in WIOA. The five required activities are:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:

- Between the ages of 14 and 21;
- Is in an educational program; and
- Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Vermont Department of Education has indicated in their "Unduplicated Child Count" report that there are approximately 50 potentially eligible students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deaf-Blind this school year.
- DBVI is currently serving 32 secondary students (17 PAS and 15 Open VR) and 12 postsecondary ages 14 through 21.
- DBVI projects 42 students for this current school year.

Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting

Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.

FFY 1017--As of September 2017:

- \$290,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)
- \$14,460 was spent on staff time and associated expenses
- \$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)
- \$175,540 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.

- \$5,485 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 32 students).
 - \$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services
- Fiscal Year=17; Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$290,000; Number of students served=32; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$175,540; Average Cost Per Student= \$5,485; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$114,460; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$270,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

Projections for FFY 18:

- \$270,000 (15% reserve requirement + re-allotment/carry over)
- \$16,000 staff time and associated expenses
- \$100,000 for coordination in contracts (LEAP, CCS)
- \$154,000 on the five required pre-employment transition services areas.
- \$3,667 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 42 students).
- \$0 on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services

Fiscal Year=18 (projected); Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$270,000; Number of students served=42; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$154,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,667; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$100,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$270,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

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

DBVI partners help us achieve the results our consumers expect. One finding of the statewide survey and focus groups identifies adaptive skills training as one of the top two services that help them achieve their goals. People who lose vision need to learn new adaptive skills to remain independent at home and work. DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructors, Rehabilitation and Low Vision Therapists. These instructors teach the skills and DBVI consumer report being more independent because of their new skills. This need for adaptive skills training is ranked very high in all sections of the CSNA and survey results show a high level of satisfaction with their skill gain results.

The other major DBVI community partner is the Vermont Industry for Business, Industry and Rehabilitation. DBVI contracts with VABIR to provide job development and employment consultant services. VABIR creates relationships with Vermont business and helps match DBVI consumers with business needs. In many instances this begins with a work experience and leads to employment. The CSNA does identify more job training as a need. VABIR provides those opportunities through progressive employment and satisfaction for these services ranks high.

2. 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. (Blind)

DBVI coordinates with several partners to meet the pre-employment and transition service needs of students. The DBVI Director and Counselors meet monthly with the Management Team of

the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. VABVI has a statewide contract from the Vermont Agency of Education to provide a statewide network of the Teachers of the Visually Impaired. The TVI's provide academic support and direct instruction to all blind and visually impaired students in Vermont. The intent of these monthly meeting is to coordinate the efforts of both agencies to support student transition needs. DBVI Counselors and TVIs in their region also meet regularly to discuss students' transition and pre-employment needs. This helps the counselor to connect students with the 5-core Pre-ETS activities by making arrangements for local work experiences, school-based employment activities, Summer LEAP, or school year LEAP job readiness retreats. There is also a monthly meeting of DBVI partner organizations called the Connections Team. The intent of this group is to discuss student needs and develop strategies that provide work experiences or job readiness opportunities in local communities or at the state level.

The DBVI Director also meets quarterly at the Agency of Education with the AOE Special Education State Director, the AOE High School Special Education Consultant, the AOE Adult Basic Education Consultant, the Director of General VR, the Director of Developmental Services, and the Director of the Assistive Technology Program. The intent of this group is to stay connected with overlap needs of WIOA and IDEA. The most current topic is discussions about the new personal learning plans and how transition serviced can be incorporated. Other important initiatives include DBVI cosponsoring with General VR a statewide conference of all local Core Transition Teams. All regions of the state have monthly meetings of school personnel and local human service providers to discuss local transition resources for students. Several workshops and guest speakers provided information about best practice for student transition. There was also time for local teams to meet and discuss strategies for their region. A new development is the formation of a Student Advisory Council. The DBVI Director will participate in an annual event that is planned by Vermont Students with disabilities. This is just getting started and the first event with be next school year.

The ultimate need is to work together with AOE and local schools to help students to use their IEP and Personal Learning Plans to create a great transition to employment training or work. DBVI has created transition action plan forms that are used for each student for entering the workforce directly, attending vocational training, or attending college. The needs for each of these future goals are specified on each form. The forms help guide the Local Education Agency IEP and 504 teams as they plan for the unique transition service needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

k. Annual Estimates

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

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

2016 Disability Status Report--Vermont

American Community Survey

Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2016). 2016 Disability Status Report:

Vermont. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI).

www.disabilitystatistics.org

Summary of Overall Vermont Data

Age--In 2016, the prevalence of disability in VT was:

- 14.3 percent for persons of all ages
- <1 percent for persons ages 4 and under
- 6.2 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
- 8.6 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
- 12.0 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
- 23.4 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 48.3 percent for persons ages 75+

Disability Type--In 2016, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in VT was:

- 2.3% reported a Visual Disability
- 4.4% reported a Hearing Disability
- 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 5.5% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 2.9% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 6.0% reported an Independent Living Disability

Gender--In 2016, 13.9 percent of females of all ages and 14.7 percent of males of all ages in VT reported a disability.

Hispanic/Latino--In 2016, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in VT was 7.9 percent.

Race--In VT in 2016, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 11.9 percent among Whites
- 9.7 percent among Black / African Americans
- <1 percent among Asians
- 46.7 percent among Native Americans
- 14.1 percent among persons of some other race(s)

Populations in Households in Vermont

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont> Ages 15 to 17=12,648

Ages 18 to 19=6,392

Ages 20=3,244

Ages 21=3,615

Ages 22 to 24=11,034

Number of Individuals who are minorities

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

<https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

Total population of Vermont= 625,741

White- 596,292

Two or More Races=10,753

Hispanic or Latino=9,208

Asian=7,947

Black or African=6,277

American Indian=2,207

Another Race=2,105

Three or More Races=610

Native Hawaiian=160

Summary of Visual Disability data in Vermont—American Community Survey

Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

Working Age Adults

DBVI estimates that there are approximately 7,100 Vermonters of working age (21-64) who are blind or severely visually impaired (meaning even with correction they are not able to easily read the newspaper). DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 5.3% of these individuals annually (293 in FFY17).

- Visual Disability Total= 14,100 (2.1% of 619,100 VT population)
- Ages 5 to 15= 100 (6.4% of 75,800)
- Age 16 to 20= 80 (<1% of 44,000)
- Age 21 to 64= 7,100 (2% of 357,300)
- Age 65 to 74= 2,500 (3.6% of 68,500)
- Age 75 and Older= 3,400 (7.9% of 42,800)

Education Rate in Vermont with Visual Disability Less

than High School=800 (11.9% of 7,100)

A HS diploma or equivalent=3,600 (50.4% of 7,100)

Some college/associates degree=1,500 (21.1% of 7,100)

College Bachelor's Degree=1,200 (16.5% of 7,100)

Number of Youth who are Deaf-Blind

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/189sATr89VCj650qtBeU29jtRGWS9yN-6JJxrEVw9YGs/edit?usp=sharing>

Ages 12 to 17=11

Ages 18 to 21=3

DBVI Projections for FFY 2018: • The cost per employment outcome will remain at the \$18,000 to \$19,000 level.

- Employment outcomes will increase to 70.

DBVI Projections for Case Status Information FFY 2018:

- The number of new plans will be 70.
- The number of individuals served through supported employment will be 10.
- The number of new applications to increase to 70. **DBVI Projections for students receiving Pre-ETS FFY 17 served 32.**

FFY 18 projection is 42.

Data from RSA 113:

New Applications FFY

2011—88 FFY 2012—
111

FFY 2013—105

FFY 2014—112 FFY

2015---102

FFY 2016---81

FFY 2017---53

FFY 2018--- 70 (Projection)

Individuals Implementing Plan, on hand October 1st FFY

2016---231

FFY 2017---206

Individuals Implementing Plan at End of Period

FFY 2016---206

FFY 2017---174

Number of Employment Plans Developed:

FFY 2011—83

FFY 2012—106

FFY 2013—98

FFY 2014—96

FFY 2015—111

FFY 2016---77

FFY 2017---48

FFY 2018---70 (Projection)

Achieve Employment Outcome

FFY 2011—69

FFY 2012—68

FFY 2013—70

FFY 2014—74

FFY 2015—90 FFY

2016---81

FFY 2017---64

FFY 2018---70 (Projection)

Closed After Services Initiated, Without Employment

FFY 2016---21

FFY 2017---16

Agency Expenditures Services Provided by DBVI (from RSA 2)

Private Community Rehabilitation Programs

FFY 2016---\$286,990

FFY 2017---\$265,444

Total Innovation and Expansion Activity Costs

FFY 2016---\$12,900

FFY 2017---\$17,347 **Assessment**

FFY 2016--- \$4,886

FFY 2017---\$3,060

Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments

FFY 2016---\$43,493

FFY 2017---\$39,193

Four-Year College or University Training

FFY 2016---\$49,517

FFY 2017---\$47,567

Occupational or Vocational Training

FFY 2016---\$112,178

FFY 2017---\$33,770

Job Readiness Training FFY

2016---\$101,347

FFY 2017---\$200,456

Disability Related Skills Training

FFY 2016---\$70,297

FFY 2017---\$48,022 **Transportation**

FFY 2016---\$61,280

FFY 2017---\$55,921

Total SE Program Service Expenditure

FFY 2016---\$7,335

FFY 2017---\$8,306

Assessment, Counseling, Guidance, and Placement

FFY 2011--\$784,571

FFY 2012--\$805,115

FFY 2013—\$913,971

FFY 2014—\$844,885

FFY 2015--\$863,383

FFY 2016---\$923,154

FFY 2017---\$1,000,008

Total Section 110 Funds Expended on Service:

FFY 2011—\$561,317

FFY 2012—\$630,236

FFY 2013—\$621,521

FFY 2014--\$643,503

FFY 2015--\$852,930

FFY 2016---\$736,425

FFY 2017---\$706,782

RSA MIS Ad Hoc Query

Average hourly earnings for competitive employment outcomes FFY

14---\$16.46

FFY 15---\$15.43

FFY 16---\$18.41

FFY 16 Average for Blind Agencies=\$16.27

Average hours worked for competitive employment outcomes FFY

14---29.08

FFY 15---29.63

FFY 16---32.60

FFY 16 Average for Blind Agencies=31.06

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

A. The VR Program;

DBVI estimates the following number of individuals will receive services:

- Individuals who are deaf-blind (Using the HKNC definition) =13
- Students who receive Pre-ETS services as a Pre-Application student=17
- Students in high school and open in the DBVI VR program=15
- Students in college=12

Pre-ETS

Budget Forecasting

Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.

FFY 1017--As of September 2017:

- **\$290,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)**
- **\$14,460 was spent on staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$175,540 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.**
- **\$5,485 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 32 students).**
- **\$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Fiscal Year=17; Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$290,000; Number of students served=32; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$175,540; Average Cost Per Student= \$5,485; Total PreETS Coordination Activities= \$114,460; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$270,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

Projections for FFY 18:

- **\$270,000 (15% reserve requirement + re-allotment/carry over)**
- **\$16,000 staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for coordination in contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$154,000 on the five required pre-employment transition services areas.**
- **\$3,667 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 42 students).**
- **\$0 on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Fiscal Year=18 (projected); Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$270,000; Number of students served=42; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$154,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,667; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$100,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$270,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:

- **Between the ages of 14 and 21;**
 - **Is in an educational program; and**
 - **Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act The Vermont Department of Education has indicated in their “Unduplicated Child Count” report that there are approximately 50 potentially eligible students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deaf-Blind this school year.**
- **DBVI is currently serving 32 secondary students age 14-21.**
 - **DBVI projects 42 for next school year.**

B. The Supported Employment Program;

DBVI has consistently increased or maintained the number of individuals served.

- FFY 2011—4; FFY 2012—10; FFY 2013—7; FFY 2014—10; FFY 2015—10; FFY 2016--11; FFY 2017---14
- FFY 2018---10 to 14 (Projection)

C. each priority category, if under an order of selection;

N/A

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

N/A

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. See above (K. 1.).

1. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

DBVI Goals and Priorities July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020

Goal 1—Employment Rate

- Employment rate two quarters post program exit

- Employment rate four quarters post program exit PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):
- % Employment rate two quarters post program exit • % Employment rate four quarters post program exit PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):
- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 2—Median Earnings

- Median earnings at two quarters post program exit PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):
- % Median earnings at two quarters post program exit PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):
- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 3—Credential Attainment

- Credential Attainment
- PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % Credential Attainment
- PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 4—Measurable Employment Skills Gains

- Measurable Employment Skills Gains PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % Measurable Employment Skills Gains PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):
- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 5—Pre-Employment Transition Skills

- All students in Vermont with a visual disability will have the opportunity to receive the 5-core Pre-ETS services.

PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % of students with a visual disability that engage in at least one of the 5-core Pre-ETS services.

PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 6—Student Transition to Work, Vocational Training, or College

- Within 2 quarters post high school exit, all individuals will either obtain a job or begin vocational training or college.

PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % of individuals who obtained a job.
- % of individuals who attended vocational training.
- % of individuals who complete vocational training.
- % of individuals who begin college.
- % of individuals who graduate college with an associate degree.
- % of individuals who graduate college with a bachelor's degree.

PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 7—Disaggregation of Participant Results

- All individuals in Vermont with a Visual Disability who want to work will receive service and achieve their employment goals.

PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % of minorities served.
- % of minorities achieve employment outcome.
- % of def-blind served.
- % of def-blind who achieve employment outcome.
- % of individuals who receive supported employment services.
- % of individuals who receive supported employment and achieve employment outcome. .

PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 8—Participation in the American Job Center Partner Programs

- All individuals in Vermont with a Visual Disability who want assistance from the AJC and partner programs will receive those service and achieve their employment goals.

PY 2018 Measures (1st baseline year):

- % of DBVI consumers who also receive services from the AJC or partner programs.
- % of individuals who participate in AJC and partner programs with an employment outcome.

PY 2019 Targets (2nd baseline year):

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Goal 9—Customer Satisfaction

- Customer Satisfaction with DBVI Services will increase.

PY 2018 Measures (FFY 17 Survey Results):

- 93%=Overall, how satisfied are you with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program?
- 93%=Overall, I am better off as a result of the services I received from DBVI.
- 95%=DBVI staff treated me with dignity and respect.
- 94%=How helpful were the staff of DBVI in helping you achieve your vocational rehabilitation goals?
- 89%=The DBVI vocational rehabilitation services I received helped me become more independent in general.
- 84%=DBVI helped me reach my job goals.

PY 2019 Targets (Next Statewide Survey will be FFY 20):

- DBVI will conduct the next statewide survey in fall 2020 with results reported in January 2021.

The SRC met in February 2018 for final review and approval of these goals and priorities. Their input is documented in the Statewide Assessment and Input of the SRC sections.

2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

Included in table above (L.1.)

3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

The goals were developed as part of DBVI's comprehensive needs assessment which included town meetings, surveys, focus groups, journal research, and staff/SRC input. DBVI staff met several times to review the needs of all results with the SRC to determine the goals. These are outlined in the input from the SRC and the statewide assessment sections.

A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

The goals were developed directly from the FFY 2018 comprehensive needs assessment, submitted in this plan.

B. The State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

DBVI worked with the SRC to update the Goals, Priorities, and Strategies based on the FFY 2018 CSNA. DBVI is in year-one of building the baseline for the new WIOA Performance Measures. Year-two of the baseline will begin July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. Targets for the new measures will be set and begin on July 1, 2019.

C. Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and finding and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

DBVI reviewed data provided on the RSA MIS query tools for performance measures, which are included in the current FFY 2018 CSNA. These were evaluated by DBVI and the SRC and are incorporate into the new goals and strategies.

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. DBVI Employment Strategies July 2018 – June 2020

Strategy 1: DBVI will collaborate with Creative Workforce Solutions to find employment in accordance with the customer's interests and qualifications.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Assess consumer's technology skills before a work experience begins.
- Create worksite preparation guidelines to make sure appropriate accommodations are accessible before the work experience begins.
- Create short-term vocational assessment opportunities by placing individuals at ReSource or the Café to learn about their skills.
- Establish clear goals with VABIR staff to increase the number of Employment Outcomes, Work Experiences, OJT, and Volunteer Opportunities as tracked in AWARE.
- Expand opportunities in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program.

Strategy 2: All high school students who are blind or visually impaired will complete a DBVI Action Plan Transition form with their DBVI Counselor and IEP or 504 Team.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 4

New actions added from the CSNA (February 2018):

- DBVI will share Pre-ETS and Transition planning information on the AOE WIKI site. **Actions** from previous CSNA that still apply:
 - Each DBVI Counselor will meet at the beginning of the school year with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to create a plan for identifying potentially eligible students and opening eligible students in the DBVI VR program.
 - Each DBVI Counselor will meet with the General VR Transition Counselor in their region.
 - A DBVI Action Plan Transition form will be completed and updated annually for all eligible students.
 - Participate in statewide Core Transition Teams.
 - Continue to increase student participation in the summer Learn Earn and Prosper (LEAP) summer work experiences and Employment Development Retreats during the school year.
- Strategy 3:** DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address “Societies reaction to blindness.”

New actions added from the CSNA (February 2018):

- DBVI will create a PSA about DBVI services and abilities of people who are blind. **Actions** from previous CSNA that still apply:
- Create products to bring and teach employers to understand the assistive equipment
- Create a network of ambassadors who demonstrate their assistive technology or canes and demonstrate to the employers about how they use technology to complete work tasks and travel independently.
- Create a video of people working at their job.
- Find opportunities to show the film “Going Blind” to employer groups at Chambers, Rotary’s, and public libraries.
- Find opportunities to teach employer groups about assistive technology.
- Encourage employers to visit the DBVI website.
- Explore the idea of connecting employers through discussion group.
- Work closely with GCEPD to promote employment of people with disabilities.
- Create educational activities for White Cane Day and Disability Awareness Month in October.
- Create a PSA involving an employed individual and company.
- Offer Simulations to demonstrate—“what is it like to be blind?”

Strategy 4: DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Continue Great Expectations consumer driven events each year.
- Create workshops to develop interpersonal and employment skills
- Create employment support groups.

- Create networking events.
- Opportunities to practice interview and job readiness skills.
- Create peer mentoring opportunities for adjustment to blindness and technology.

Strategy 5: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Create opportunities for Peer to Peer Technology Instruction
- DBVI will continue to expand the information on the website and will work with the SRC for ideas.
- Use Customer-Centered Culture to determine “what types of information customers really want?”

Strategy 6: DBVI will address transportation challenges.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed:

New actions added from the CSNA completed February 2018:

- DBVI will work with VTRANS to learn more about their beta website that helps people connect with all the available transportation options in their area. **Actions** from previous CSNA that still apply:
- Coordinate with the Vermont Transportation Department on their new initiate and technology application that helps travelers find all the available transportation options in an area.

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Consider policy to pay for mileage and time of VABVI drivers in order to have a network of drivers available to meet transportation needs.
- Participate in system level planning.
- Assist VABVI to increase the number of volunteer drivers.
- Promote the option for DBVI to pay for the first 60 days of a ride to the job.

Strategy 7: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services.

Goal and Priority Areas Addressed:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- DBVI will develop a consistent statewide orientation to DBVI services which will be implemented in all four regional offices.
- DBVI will work within the principles of Customer-Centered Culture to make sure we are answering the question: “What does the consumer really want?”
- DBVI will continually evaluate timeliness, accuracy, and ease of obtaining services. DBVI will establish an ongoing closure survey. Results will be shared and evaluated with the SRC on an ongoing basis.
- Ask customers to evaluate DBVI products using the Customer-Centered Culture model.
- Implement a closure survey that can be sent to all closed cases.

Strategy 8: DBVI will increase capacity to serve underserved populations through the implementation of comprehensive outreach.

Goal and Priority Area:

New actions added from the CSNA completed February 2018:

- DBVI will create an inclusive outreach plan that includes consumers and providers. **Actions** from previous CSNA that still apply:
- Develop a set of outreach materials to be used at events across the state including outreach to minorities and underserved populations.
- Support efforts to establish Deaf-Blind SSP services in Vermont.
- Coordinate with VR Transition Counselors, and the Teachers of the Visually Impaired to increase the number of transition students served. Create some documents that explain what DBVI can offer.
- Create a statewide system to track all visually impaired students as they graduate high school.
- Add 5-hours / week to the job developer or counselor position in Burlington to expand outreach efforts.

Strategy 9: DBVI will explore outreach strategies to increase applicants and diversify the DBVI caseload.

Goal and Priority Areas:

New actions added from the CSNA completed February 2018:

- DBVI outreach will also include program information to potential consumers and service providers that will establish clear communication and expectations.

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Educate providers about the importance of timely referrals.
- Outreach to developmental services and mental health agencies that typically do not referred to DBVI.
- Each DBVI region will create an outreach plan for the year that includes outreach to minorities and other underserved or underrepresented individuals in each region.
- The job developer or counselor in Burlington will use an additional 5-hours/week to build relationships with community groups of minority populations.

Strategy 10: DBVI staff will have the tools to deliver services quickly to DBVI customers. Goal and Priority Areas:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- DBVI will explore the use of purchasing laptops or iPads for staff to do their job more efficiently.
- DBVI will explore professional development opportunities with the TACE Center. **Strategy 11:** DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training.

Goal and Priority Areas:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- DBVI will work closely with vocational technical education centers in Vermont to help high school students and adults prepare for the workforce.
- Establish relationships with vocational centers to get consumers trained for positions in the area
- Attend State Technical Education Director's Meeting
- Evaluate the impact of progressive employment on outcomes.
- Track education and training opportunities that lead to degrees or credentials.

- Establish working relationships with Vocational Tech Centers and track participation.
Strategy 12: DBVI will implement activities designed to reduce the number of individuals who are closed in a status 28 (not employed).

Goal and Priority Areas:

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- DBVI will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of status 28 closures to identify any specific trends or issues that DBVI needs to address.

Strategy 13: DBVI will partner with the Vermont Department of Labor, Job Centers, and Adult Education to provide employment training options for dual DBVI/DOL customers.

Goal and Priority Areas:

New actions added from the CSNA completed February 2018:

- DBVI will implement a plan for staying connected with all DOL partners of the AJC.
Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:
- DBVI will work closely with DOL to create and implement the Unified Plan with a common mission and vision to include all Vermonters in the workforce.
- DBVI will establish a system for tracking participation of DBVI customers who utilize DOL services and training.
- DBVI will work with CWS local teams and DOL to obtain employment needs of companies and then match DBVI customers with specific training.
- DBVI will invite DOL to a staff meeting to discuss collaboration ideas.

Strategy 14: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job.

Goal and Priority Areas:

New actions added from the CSNA completed February 2018:

- DBVI will create a consumer listserv that will be used to share technology solutions for access and work and in the community.

Actions from previous CSNA that still apply:

- Create a menu of training options ranging from expert training to independent study • Create Peer to Peer Technology Instruction
- DBVI will problem solve to make job sites accessible through technology training. Use a team approach for a given situation including customer, job developer, counselor, job site technology evaluation, and training.
- DBVI will assist customers to continuously improve work related technology skills like using the internet, Microsoft Office, M312, and Adobe documents so they can do their job in the most efficient way.

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.

DBVI has a strong and effective process for determining assistive technology needs and delivering necessary training. The DBVI technology evaluator has been providing this service to DBVI consumers for more than 20-years. This service is consistently ranked in all surveys as the most helpful for meeting employment goals. Technology is the key for opening doors for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our goal is to stay current and to find solutions for accessing the essential functions of a job. Technology is often the answer for creating access to job tasks. Once the technology is identified, it is installed and followed-up with on-site training.

The most common solutions involve screen magnification, screen readers, and electronic magnification. The I-Technology has created opportunities for DBVI consumers to use mobile technology for work tasks. People can now use voiceover on the iPhone to access their email, contacts, and calendars on-the-go. There are also several new apps that can take a picture of text document and have it read using voiceover. Access to information is essential to many job tasks and DBVI makes this a priority.

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.

Data from the CSNA shows that DBVI needs to continue outreach efforts in all areas. The main strategy is for each region to implement an annual outreach plan. This plan will include general outreach and specific outreach to minority groups and underserved and underrepresented groups. These plans will vary due to the nature of each region. For example, the Northeast Kingdom is very rural, and city of Burlington is very populated. Each plan will specifically include outreach to minority groups, people who are older and want to work, students, and individuals who are deaf-blind.

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).

DBVI uses several strategies to address the needs and transition. It begins with outreach to all students who are blind or visually impaired. Before school begins each year, DBVI Counselors meet the Teachers of the Visually Impaired for all high schools in their region. They review the student list and determining which are potentially eligible as Pre-Application students and which are ready to be open the DBVI VR as an “Open” case. All of these students have the opportunity to participate in the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Outreach is also made directly to students and families with an explanation about the ways DBVI can assist with Transition Planning and the availability of the 5-core Pre-ETS services.

Several strategies are used to deliver the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Some students may decide to begin as a Pre-Application student and participate in work experiences in their local communities. They may also be connected with special job readiness training opportunities in their local high schools. Other students may choose to participate in short-term residential workbased learning or job readiness training. This strategy is necessary in Vermont because of the rural nature. Many small communities do not have any work experiences available. This approach makes it possible for students to choose from a variety of work experiences and internships in Burlington where there are many employers. During the school year there are several job readiness workshops during school vacations and weekends, so students don’t miss school. This approach takes several partners and has shown great results. Please see section “P” for Progress Updates.

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

See Above (O.1).

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

DBVI will continue to use the Creative Workforce System to connect DBVI consumers with employers. Progressive Employment continues to be very effective. Many DBVI consumers begin with a work experience and eventually get a job at that company. Other individuals try a couple of different work experiences and decide to go for more education or vocational training in an area of their interest. These experiences are always positive steps toward determining future careers and help people learn what they like and don't like. It is also a great way to educate employers about the abilities of people doing these jobs.

DBVI also supports college or vocational training which ultimately lead to good jobs. DBVI consistently ranks above the national blind agency average for wages and number of hours worked. This result is directly connected to college and vocational training. DBVI is in the process of developing baseline measures for credential attainment and measurable employment skill gains. These opportunities will be enhanced through collaborations with all of the WIOA partners. DBVI will evaluate what each program can offer and then connect DBVI consumers to those programs.

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

DBVI will work with DOL and AOE to maximize integration of individuals who are blind or visually impaired into the available trainings and programs. This will involve a commitment from all partners for universal design. DBVI has been a voice for this approach and provides expertise in this area.

WIOA is a great opportunity for DBVI consumers to access these programs that have typically been underutilized by this population. Access to these programs has proven to be challenging in the past and these new partnerships using universal design will certainly open doors.

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

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

See Above (O.1).

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and See Above (O.1).

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.

DBVI has a long and successful history of collaboration with the larger General VR Agency in Vermont to connect consumers with the most severe disabilities with the Developmental Service Agencies in Vermont. This collaboration makes it possible for students to be identified early in high school and a determination about meeting a funding priority before graduation.

In cases when students do not meet the criteria for a waiver, DBVI has established a partnership directly with a Development Service Agency to provide specialized job development services.

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: FFY 2017 Goals and Priorities as outlined in the state plan **Goal 1**—Economic independence.

- Livable wage job and income
- Stay employed at least 6 months
- Stay employed one year or more
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Employment Skill Gains FFY 2017 Measures:
- % Employment 2nd quarter after exit
- % Employment 4th quarter after exit
- % Credential Attainment
- % Measurable employment skill gains FFY 2017 Targets:
- DBVI is collecting data for year one of the baseline (July 2017 – June 2018).

Program Year 2017 results:

- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- Progressive employment continues to be a very effective strategy in many ways. It is a great way for consumers to learn new job skills and build confidence. It is also a great way to educate employers about how a blind person can use simple accommodations to accomplish essential functions of the work.
- College and other vocational training also lead our consumer to good paying jobs. During this training DBVI supports a portion of tuition reimbursement and provides necessary adaptive technology and training. Assistive technology and training are consistently ranked as most helpful for meeting training and employment goals.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- DBVI implemented the AWARE case management system in September 2017 and it is now possible to collect data and build the 2-year data baseline.

Goal 2—Employment preparation.

- High school students within 6 months of graduation or exit from HS will obtain a job or attend vocational training or college.

FFY 2017 Measures:

Within 6 months after graduation or exiting High school:

- % of individuals with a job
- % of individuals attending vocational training
- % of individuals attending college FFY 2017 Targets:
- DBVI is collecting baseline data on these measures during PY 18 and PY 19. Targets will be set beginning July 1, 2019.

Program Year 2017 results:

- 100% of students who exited high school obtained a job or started vocational training or college.
- DBVI Served 17 Pre-Application Students; 15 High School Students; and 12 College Students.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- The summer LEAP program and school year weekend retreats have inspired students to believe they can work. These programs are designed to promote success at these initial employment experiences. Students receive a lot of feedback about their work performance and receive enough support for success.
- Students also learn from and encourage each other. Many of the older students become leaders and share their success experiences at college and work.
- Both programs emphasize the importance of assistive technology and create real world opportunities for practice.
- The weekend retreats focus on workplace readiness which builds a strong foundation for students in transition.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- A factor that impedes progress is when students or families are not responsive to the DBVI series of Pre-Employment opportunities.

Goal 3—Consumer satisfaction.

- Consumer satisfaction with DBVI services will increase.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- DBVI will conduct a statewide customer satisfaction survey for FFY 2017 FFY 2017

Targets:

- DBVI will maintain overall consumer satisfaction at or above the 90% level. Program Year 2017 results:
- 93% responded being Better-Off because of services from DBVI.
- 89% responded that services met their expectations.
- 90% responded that DBVI staff were helpful to achieve their vocational goals.
- 93% responded that services helped them become more Independent.
- 93% responded that they were satisfied with the services from DBVI.
- 89% responded that DBVI delivered services well.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- DBVI staff consistently delivers services well and help consumers to meet their goals and become better off.
- Staff are trained to use Customer-Centered Culture to obtain the Voice of the Customer as we develop strategies to accomplish desired results.
- Staff also use many of the practices in the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey to create goals, organize priorities, and effectively work with consumers by understanding their needs and developing a plan of services to accomplish their goals.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- A positive factor is that DBVI consistently delivers a high level of customer satisfaction.

Goal 4—Improve earnings.

- Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation. FFY 2017 Measures:
- RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: DBVI wages compared to state average, FFY 2017 Targets:
- DBVI consumer wages will increase from 79% of state average to 82% of state average wage.

Program Year 2017 results:

- The RSA Standards and Indicators are no longer calculated.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- This RSA Standard and Indicator is no longer measured.

Goal 5— More consumers will be employed.

- More consumers will be employed.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Percentage of DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome.

FFY 2017 Targets:

- DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome will increase from 73% in to 78% (S+I 1.2).

Program Year 2017 results:

- The RSA Standards and Indicators are no longer calculated.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- This RSA Standard and Indicator is no longer measured.

Goal 6—Increase capacity to serve unserved or underserved populations; specifically:

- Deaf—Blind
- Minority
- Individuals who are transition age (14—24) General Outreach to increase number of individuals served

FFY 2017 Measures:

- Increase the numbers served in each category.
- Increase the number of Deaf-Blind served from 3 to 5.
- Increase the percentage of transition age youth served to 22% from 21%.
- Increase the percentage of high school students served to 7% from 6%.
- Increase the number of individuals served who are minorities from 7 to 9.

Program Year 2017 results:

- 13 individuals meet the HKNC deaf-blind definition.
- The percentage of transition age youth served was 22%.
- The percentage of high school students served was 15%.
- The percentage of minorities served was 10%.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- Key strategies involve effective outreach. Each region creates an inclusive regional outreach plan. Each region creates a strategy to reach out to their communities.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- The greatest challenge is getting a response from individuals who do not recognize the value of these services that can help them adapt to vision loss and find meaningful employment.

Goal 7—DBVI will work in collaboration with Creative Workforce Solutions and the DOL to ensure people who are blind or visually impaired have access to services through progressive employment opportunities and the state workforce investment system.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- Increase the number of individuals served by both DBVI and DOL. As indicated on the DBVI tracking database (105—R)

- DBVI will have a total of 10 customers who are served by DBVI and DOL together.

Program Year 2017 results:

- These data were not collected in the transition to the new AWARE system. Informal information does indicate that consumers are more likely to work solely with DBVI.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- The DBVI Director has been very involved with the Unified Plan for Vermont which will bring together all of the workforce partners.
- Staff are learning about the potential partnerships to meet the need of individuals who are blind.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- Typically partner programs are not accessible to individuals who are blind.
- DBVI believes the new partnerships through WIOA will lead to DBVI customers participating in the many partner programs of the Job Centers.

Goal 8— DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- The number of 26 closures achieved through the supported employment program will increase.

FFY 2017 Targets:

- The number of individuals served through collaboration with VR and Developmental Services will increase from 8 to 10 individuals.

Program Year 2017 results:

- DBVI provided SE services to 10 individuals.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- It is very important to get high school students connected with SE programs before they graduate.
- DBVI provides a key role in the partnership with Developmental Services Agencies by bringing expertise in low vision and adaptive blindness skills.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- The numbers for this population can vary greatly from year to year due to the low incidence of blindness. The key is for DBVI to stay closely connected with all visually impaired students in the state and act quickly with supported employment needs are anticipated. **Goal 9**—DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community providers to build adaptive blindness skills.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- Increase the number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABVI services.

FFY 2017 Targets:

- Target is to stay within the 70—80% range.

Program Year 2017 results:

A total of 70 individuals received services from VABVI and 50 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- This service is consistently ranked in the top two for helping to meet employment goals. DBVI leadership meets monthly with VABVI leadership to discuss continuous improvement in service delivery.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- A positive factor is that VABVI services are ranked by over 90% of consumers as being the most helpful with their employment and independence goals.

Goal 10—DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community providers to build skills for the workforce.

FFY 2017 Measures:

- Increase the number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABIR services.

FFY 2017 Targets:

- Target is to stay within the 70—80% range.

Program Year 2017 results:

- A total of 30 individuals received services from VABIR and 15 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 50 %).

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- Employment Consultant staff through VABIR create strong and effective relationships with employers and then match consumers to meet those needs.
- The use of Salesforce has proven to be a great way to connect consumers with a strong employment match.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- A positive factor is the increased openness of employers to allow progressive employment opportunities at their business.

General Program Results and Highlights

Recent Developments and Accomplishments

This year DBVI organized several events around the state to educate the public about White Cane Safety. The white cane is a symbol of strength and independence for blind and visually impaired people, used by people who are blind as they travel independently. Members of the public received training in safe travel techniques from an Orientation and Mobility Instructor, increasing awareness of what it is like to travel with the white cane.

The main events were in Burlington, Montpelier, and Rutland. Each included a walk guided by an Orientation and Mobility Specialist to demonstrate proper use of the white cane and safe travel techniques. These events are great opportunities to educate the public and to have meaningful discussions about how blind and visually impaired individuals travel within their communities independently.

DBVI staff worked closely as a team this year to accomplish major initiatives. This included updating several policies to reflect the intent of the recent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This Act represents a significant shift towards serving students transitioning to work. This year DBVI staff participated in several regional and statewide events to collaborate and share resources about helping students successfully prepare and enter the workforce.

Another major initiative was the successful rollout of the AWARE automated case management system. This initial design phase was followed by pilot testing, training, and full implementation. This system moves DBVI into compliance with the new WIOA reporting requirements and will help DBVI staff to efficiently complete their work.

Future Directions

DBVI believes the best path forward includes a solid foundation in technology. Relevant new technologies emerge every day, and our staff stay current to determine the solutions that help our customers achieve their employment and independence goals. Several new products have emerged this year. For example, a new free application was launched this year that allows users to read text by pointing the camera of their phone towards the text. It also can read the bar code on items in a store and read back the contents of the item. Technology helps people to accomplish tasks independently, and DBVI will maintain a strong foundation in new innovations.

New technologies are exciting and open many new doors; however, DBVI is committed to the importance of the basics such as touch typing and the importance of Braille. These skills are essential for students transitioning to higher education and job training. The Job Readiness Workshops will incorporate opportunities to use these skills in the upcoming year.

DBVI will be piloting some exciting work from home opportunities this year. Our goal is to identify the skills and service products needed by Vermont employers. We will then support specialized training and technology to meet those business needs.

Student Programs

LEAP Program Overview

The LEAP Program provides students and young adults, ages 14-24, who are blind or visually impaired the opportunity to gain skills needed to be independent, confident, and productive with the outcome of increased employability. LEAP is a workforce development program which delivers Pre-Employment Transitional Services. The program provides work-based learning experiences, internships and workshops so that participants are more competitive entering the workforce.

LEAP includes an intensive summer residential program which includes living in community housing and focuses on independent life skills, leadership, working with others, and achieving success working a full week.

LEAP also facilitates year-round Professional Growth Retreats focused on work-based readiness training for students to develop social and independent living skills. Themes of past retreats have included: Technology and Transportation; Workplace Relationships; Food and Finance; The Interview; The Resume; Networking, and more.

To understand the power and impact of LEAP, check out our video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVrG1ESESjM>.

Recent Developments and Accomplishments

A significant accomplishment for the LEAP Program has been creating opportunities for students to engage in leadership development amongst their peers and their communities. During our summer residential program, we place returning students to become Student Leaders or Crew Leader Assistants. These leaders serve as significant role models for younger students, while the experience provides the leaders with a sense of confidence, accomplishment and responsibility.

One student wrote a thank you letter to her mentor:

- “You are the best mentor I could ask for. That's because you didn't just teach me skills like food preparation and cane travel. You taught me that blindness is not a tragedy, not something to be ashamed of or covered up. Just by being your cheerful, caring, funny, and independent self, you showed me that I don't have to live by the low expectations that others set for me.”

Future Directions

The LEAP Program is currently developing its **Technology Builds Brighter Futures Program**. Our society is becoming increasingly reliant on technology. It is essential that individuals with blindness or visual impairments have access to this space as digital citizens. LEAP is committed to empowering our students to access the tools they need to become as capable and competitive as their sighted peers.

The **Technology Builds Brighter Futures** classes will encourage students to collaborate on creative projects using assistive technology. In 2018, each student will participate in an assistive technology class that encompasses a digital culture of sharing, collaboration, and creativity.

Results

From 2014 to 2017 the LEAP program has grown from 18 to 61 participants. The number of training hours has increased from 15,000 in 2014 to 27,000 in 2017. This has resulted in significant skill gains for students in employment and independent living skills. Each student receives a report of their progress which is shared with school teams, teachers of the visually impaired, and DBVI counselors. Students learn to identify their strengths and areas of vocational interest. In 2017, 75% of the interns had enrolled in college programs, and the remaining 25% are working with their DBVI counselors to match their skills to a career path.

Quotes from LEAP Students:

- “My favorite part of working at ReSOURCE was communicating and interacting with my other coworkers and customers because working with people effectively improved communication and customer service skills. I'll be more prepared for possible employment opportunities in the future.”
- “I learned that there will always be changes that you aren't expecting at a workplace, and that it is good to ask questions and talk about them.”
- “I am most proud of being able to run a broadcast on my own. I once thought that being blind was going to make radio impossible for me pursue, but this experience helped me understand my abilities.”
- “I am proud of the fact that I was able to get to and from work independently, that I did my job well, and that I felt more confident as time went on.”

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

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.

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

DBVI is in the first year of building the performance measures baseline. The second year of the baseline will be PY 2019 from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. Performance targets will be set for PY 2020 that begins July 1, 2019.

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

See strategies about LEAP in (P.1.A.) above.