New York State Rehabilitation Council
2020-2021 Annual Report

Seeing the Light
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About the Cover

Artist:
Bonnie Page, Owner, Mad Brook Mobile Art Studio LLC.

The painting titled Seeing the Light, was inspired by a year of loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an inspirational piece to remind us that there is still beauty in the light, we just need to look for it.

Bonnie’s interest in art began when she was in high school and began making her art as gifts for her family. At that time, she did not think her interest in art would turn into her own business. It was years later, when her daughter encouraged her to consider selling her art, that she began believing she could turn her talents and interests into a business.

Bonnie heard about Adult Career Continuing Educational Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) from a friend who worked with ACCES-VR and decided to apply for services. While working with ACCES-VR, Bonnie was provided services and supports that assisted her in reaching her goal of being self-employed as an art instructor and owning and operating a mobile art studio. ACCES-VR, specifically Bonnie’s vocational rehabilitation counselor, provided career guidance and counseling, assistance connecting with the small business center in her area, provided financial support for startup business supplies and equipment, and leads and contacts to develop and grow her business. When speaking with Bonnie’s vocational rehabilitation counselor, she said, “Bonnie is very talented and a good instructor.”

With her determination and assistance from ACCES-VR, Bonnie has grown her business. She specializes in acrylic paintings, glass tinting, and henna designs. She offers classes at festivals, works with youth groups, does fundraisers, and sells products on ETSY, EBAY and Facebook. She has developed and posted instructional art videos on social media and is working on connecting with community colleges and other schools to offer continuing education courses.

When asked what advice she would give others wanting to pursue self-employment, Bonnie said, “Keep trying even if it is hard. It will get tough but keep going. If it is your passion and your love never give up!”
Representing New Yorkers with disabilities, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) works collaboratively with ACCES-VR to provide valued advice and guidance on vocational rehabilitation services to the New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education.

At the start of this year, it was impossible to predict the continued ebb and flow of the COVID-19 pandemic. New remote business practices adopted during the early days of the pandemic continued for both the SRC and ACCES-VR. However, while group meetings are still conducted remotely, ACCES-VR opened its doors again in August to see individuals in-person by appointment. The ability to provide safe choices for individuals to meet with their ACCES-VR counselor has always been critical and became particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic. Feeling connected and invested in each other throughout this time has been essential, and the SRC also maintained that connection with ACCES-VR. Their partnership, advice, and guidance has helped to shape and guide ACCES-VR on the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in these ever-evolving times.

While in the midst of managing the impact of the pandemic, the SRC welcomed a new Chair, Ellice Switzer and sole Vice-Chair, Joe Delgado. Ms. Switzer has led the SRC with a calm and steadying hand throughout this year that also included a restructuring of their committees to align with the ACCES-VR priorities in the NYS Combined State Plan and the WIOA performance measures. This change led the SRC to bring in Rachel Anderson from VRTAC-QM to help them learn more about RSA-911 data, WIOA performance measures and the other measures that matter. As Vice-Chair, Mr. Joe Delgado led the membership committee with an emphasis on the importance of diversity in the members representing the SRC. He was integral in the recruitment of eleven new members this year including individuals from more diverse backgrounds who represent unserved and underserved populations as well as two new non-voting members. Together, Ms. Switzer and Mr. Delgado have strengthened the SRC’s membership and advisement to ACCES-VR.

The SRC will say goodbye at the end of the year to Mr. Greg Lau and Ms. Jennifer Machucki. Mr. Lau, who chaired the Transition and Youth committee, encouraged the SRC to see the issues of transition and youth as all-encompassing. As a result of his advocacy, the SRC disbanded the committee so that the members could infuse their knowledge across all the SRC committees. Ms. Machucki has been a voice of advocacy for people with disabilities and played a key role as the SRC representative to ACCES-VR’s workgroup that developed and reviewed the participant, youth, and vendor surveys. Her contributions and insights helped to shape each of those surveys which will provide ACCES-VR with vital information
about its services. I would like to thank both Mr. Lau and Ms. Machucki for their tremendous contributions to the SRC and for their years of committed support.

The partnership between the SRC and ACCES-VR positively impacts the vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities seeking to obtain, maintain and advance in competitive integrated employment. On behalf of Chancellor Young, the New York State Board of Regents, and Commissioner Betty Rosa, thank you for your dedication and service.

Sincerely,

Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, ACCES Deputy Commissioner
Message from the Chair

I had the privilege of stepping into the role of Chair of the New York State Rehabilitation Council in January 2021, during a time when both the Council and ACCES-VR were in the midst of navigating extremely challenging conditions created by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The SRC serves as a partner to ACCES-VR in an advisory capacity, working closely the ACCES Deputy Commissioner, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff; Diane Woodward, Manager of Policy, Training and WIOA Implementation Units; and ACCES-VR staff. Our objective during the past year was to support ACCES-VR in its mission to provide timely, high-quality supports and services to New Yorkers with disabilities, despite the challenges of shifting service delivery models and administrative functions to virtual and remote environments. We have also worked hard to expand the capacity of SRC members to support the objectives within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan, despite being unable to meet in person this year, relying instead on virtual platforms to conduct the business of the SRC.

The SRC approached our objectives in several ways. First, by seeking to understand the impact of a global pandemic on vocational rehabilitation (VR) performance metrics, and to understand the long-term impact on referrals and service options as a result of changing operations within community-based agencies, schools, and other workforce partners. In addition to data-based dialogues, the SRC invited Rachel Anderson of the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VR-TAC QM), to instruct the SRC membership on VR performance metrics and nationwide trends. The information was especially informative for the 11 new members added to the Council in 2021.

To further align the SRCs efforts with ACCES-VR's priorities and goals in its section of the NYS Combined State Plan, we undertook an extensive process to evaluate and revise our standing committee structure, to one which supports performance in those areas more effectively. As Chair, I initiated a review of existing committee work against the required functions of the SRC, as well as the NYS WIOA Combined State Plan metrics. Of four standing committees prior to 2021, two were maintained, one was retired, and two additional committees added. In each case, the four newly established or reformed committees formalized a clear and comprehensive scope of work and created an annual calendar of committee actions. The work of the remaining standing committees is described in detail within this report. In summary:
**Policy and Planning Committee** – This standing committee was retired, but a scope of work remains in effect for an ad hoc committee as needed. The work of this committee involves input on substantive ACCES-VR policy updates and revisions, which occur on a non-regular basis as befits an ad hoc committee status.

**Workforce Development** - This committee was retired, however much of the emphasis of this former committee will be incorporated into the newly formed Business Engagement Committee.

**Transition**- This committee was retired in an effort to infuse transition considerations across all committees and SRC activities, rather than relegating the topic to a single committee. A special focus of the SRC is the ongoing effort to implement and scale up the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) statewide.

**Quality Assurance and Improvement (QAI)** - This committee is critical to the SRC’s ongoing activities and will remain with an expanded and clarified scope of work. The QAI committee will play an important role in the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process, stakeholder surveys, and regular evaluation of other performance indicators.

**Business Engagement** - This committee was formed with the intent of advising ACCES-VR on strategies and partnerships which will improve business engagement and result in increased opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities to obtain competitive integrated employment in a 21st century labor economy including middle skills, middle class jobs and access to apprenticeship and training programs.

**Membership** – The membership committee is now a standing committee as opposed to its previous iteration as an ad hoc committee. This change reflects the ongoing need to recruit, interview and onboard new members, as well as monitor member engagement and composition on a year-round basis.

**Annual Report** - This committee was formed to ensure that the SRC is able to develop a high-quality annual report, in cooperation with ACCES-VR, which reflects the breadth of work undertaken by the Council each year. A standing committee will facilitate timely completion of the report.

In addition to the work of committee restructuring, the SRC has engaged with Cornell University researchers, who are assisting with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process using the qualitative method of mental modeling to engage stakeholders on their experiences with ACCES-VR. The SRC looks forward to continuing participation in this process at each quarterly meeting during 2022 and will use the results to inform strategies and recommendation to continue to support ACCES-VR’s ACCES-VR performance improvements.

The many structural changes to the SRC this year required the Executive Committee to update our Guiding Principles again and afforded the opportunity to make other revisions
which better reflect our obligations as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended under WIOA.

The members of the New York State Rehabilitation Council have been honored to serve in collaboration with ACCES-VR during the course of this year. The work of the SRC reflects our dedication to addressing the challenges at hand, while maintaining our focus on the future, and advancing vocational rehabilitation practices within New York State. The SRC meetings are open to the public and we invite anyone who would like to join us or provide public comment. For more information about the SRC, its meetings and ACCES-VR, please visit us at: http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr.

Respectfully,
Ellice Switzer, Chair
New York State Rehabilitation Council
Committee Summaries

Executive Committee:

Purpose:

The Executive Committee is empowered to act on behalf of the full SRC in all matters concerning the SRC when it is not possible for the full SRC to meet. The Executive Committee understand that any actions on behalf of the full SRC are subject to ratification at the next regularly scheduled quarterly SRC meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Representation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellice Switzer (Chair)</td>
<td>Ceylane Meyers-Ruff</td>
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<td>Joseph Delgado (Co-Chair)</td>
<td>Diane Woodward</td>
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<td>Sebastian Chittilappilly</td>
<td>Pam Brehm-Bisaillon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathleen Grosvenor</td>
<td>Lorie Boyd</td>
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<td>Nancy Grant</td>
<td>David Morgan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Lau</td>
<td>Jennifer Semonite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillary Nichols</td>
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<td>Andy Sink</td>
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Committee Accomplishments:

During the 2020-2021 year the Executive Committee had planned to resume in-person meetings. However, as variants of the COVID-19 virus were emerging, and vaccinees were just beginning to be rolled out, collectively the decision was made to continue meeting virtually via Zoom. The Executive Committee planned and coordinated four quarterly meetings and together with ACCES-VR and the SRC members organized and/or delivered presentations on:

- Resources, Advocacy, and Job Search Opportunities presented by the NYS WIOA and Workforce Development Partners from the Disability Employment Initiative
• WIOA Performance Accountability Measures and Other Measures That Matter presented by Rachel Anderson from VRTAC-QM
• Be the Future: Transforming Employment for People with Disabilities a joint presentation by SRC member Hillary Nichols and Frank Falatyn of FALA Technologies
• NYS Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (SCION) presented by SRC member Alan Gallagher
• The ACCES-VR and SRC Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment present by Cornell's Yang-Tan Institute

ACCES-VR Staff Presentations to the SRC
• Overview of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
• Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for Potentially Eligible Students
• An Overview and Review of Order of Selection Metrics
• 2021 Satisfaction Surveys

Additionally, the Executive Committee presided over the process of restructuring existing sub-committees by revising and clarifying the scope of work for each sub-committee. Now four sub-committees have aligned their work more closely with ACCES-VR’s priorities and goals in its section of the NYS Combine State Plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance measures. In collaboration with the SRC’s Chair, Vice-Chair, ACCES-VR leadership and SRC members, each sub-committee created a work plan, calendars, timelines, and tasks including descriptions of the purpose, mission and expected inputs and outputs from members of sub-committees and ACCES-VR liaisons. This has provided increased structure to the SRC and strengthened its partnership with ACCES-VR and other WIOA partners to support a positive impact on the lives of New Yorkers with disabilities seeking to obtain, maintain or advance in employment.

Finally, the Executive committee reviewed and amended the bylaws, referred to as the New York State SRC Guiding Principles, to reflect the changing work of the SRC.
Ongoing Roles and Responsibilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Committee Activities</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considers and recommends actions to ACCES-VR that will facilitate achievements of SRC mandates.</td>
<td>Provides updates, data, and information as needed to inform the activities of the Executive Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receives monthly reports from standing committee Chairs on the status of activities.</td>
<td>Provides actionable input and feedback on all activities of the Executive Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides meeting support in the form of minutes, connection information, and scheduling.</td>
<td>Informs the development of the quarterly SRC meeting agenda.</td>
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Membership Committee:

Purpose:

The Membership Committee recruits, interviews, and recommends members to be appointed to the SRC. The SRC Vice-Chairperson chairs the committee and it also includes the ACCES-VR Liaison to the Executive Committee. The Membership Committee is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion when identifying, recruiting, and recommending new members to ACCES-VR, the SRC, and the NYS Board of Regents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Delgado (Chair)</td>
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<td>Sebastian Chittilappilly (Co-Chair)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Megan Brown</td>
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<td>Evelyn Pugh</td>
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<td>Lafayette Williams</td>
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Committee Accomplishments:

The 2020-2021 year was a busy and success year for the Membership Committee. Working together, this committee and ACCES-VR appointed eleven new SRC members. A new member orientation was completed and included presentations and information on the SRC’s:

- Mission and Vision
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Stakeholders’ Composition
- Guiding Principles

Other topics covered during the new member orientation by the SRC, and ACCES-VR included:

- What is a 4.2 recommendation?
- History of Vocational Rehabilitation
- An Overview of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the NYS Combined State Plan
- Video Overviews of the ACCES-VR Departments:
  - Jim Barron - District Office Administration
  - Ray Pierce - Service Delivery
  - Alesia Simco - Transition and Youth Services
  - Joe Tedesco - Independent Living Councils (ILCs) and Business Relations

Ongoing Roles and Responsibilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Committee Activities</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintains and updates membership lists and term dates of all SRC members.</td>
<td>Initiates the application process, participates in interviewing candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annually solicits applications and recruits for appointments to the SRC.</td>
<td>Creates application materials, forms, and other information to share with Membership Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertises the open membership positions utilizing committee members, community leaders, and other appropriate means of communication that will reach a wide variety of individuals throughout New York State.</td>
<td>Submits recommended candidates to the NYS Board of Regents for appointment approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews candidates using a panel of no less than two members of the Membership Committee and the ACCES-VR Liaison.</td>
<td>Maintains communication with candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews attendance, participation, and professional contributions of each member whose first term is ending.</td>
<td>Supports the Membership Committee in developing the orientation, meeting agendas, materials, and information as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When needed, solicits candidates to fill a vacated SRC position outside of the annual membership process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plans and creates the agenda for new member orientations and leads the new member orientation on an annual basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plans and creates other trainings for new members as needed.</td>
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Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee:

Purpose:

The Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee (QAI) supports the implementation and continuous improvement of ACCES-VR services through advisement on ACCES-VR’s section and priorities in the NYS WIOA Combined State Plan. The QAI Committee collaborates with ACCES-VR on ways to improve services including the quality of service provided by vendors and the number of participants expressing at or above 90% satisfied with ACCES-VR’s services. Additionally, the QAI Committee provides advice and strategies to ACCES-VR on ways to improve the quality of due process.

Committee Accomplishments:

During the 2020-2021 year a new Chairperson was elected, and new members were appointed to be on the QAI Committee. With these changes in the committee membership, much of the work focused on developing competencies on the WIOA common performance measures and the ACCES-VR section and priorities of the NYS Combined State Plan. Through the building of these competencies the QAI committee has been able to advise and provide feedback to ACCES-VR.

The QAI Committee elected one of its members to represent the SRC in the development and input into ACCES-VR’s participant, provider, and youth satisfaction surveys. Previously these surveys were developed by a contractor and this was ACCES-VR’s first time creating the surveys. Four survey development teams were assembled to create
survey questions, review data, and identify the method of selection for sending the surveys to participants. For the participant survey, 10,000 participants in various phases of the vocational rehabilitation process were randomly selected and mailed surveys. The provider surveys were emailed approximately 501 providers (i.e., all Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) providers and Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision (BPSS) active in the 2019 calendar year. Finally, ACCES-VR wanted to survey youth, ages 14-21, to better understand why they are leaving ACCES-VR service prior to Individual Plan of Employment (IPE). This survey was sent to 5,000 youth. Results of the surveys will be shared with the SRC and opportunities to provide feedback from the SRC will be sought.

Additionally, the QAI committee coordinated and presented information on Be the Future: Transforming Employment for People with Disabilities. This presentation shared:

- The challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and employers in the changing employment landscape, particularly in the advanced manufacturing sector.
- The strength of forming partnerships with the State University at New York (SUNY) engineering programs, SUNY Community Colleges, and high schools.
- Emerging industries in need of talent including construction trades, food and beverage, advanced manufacturing, information technology and healthcare services.
- Opportunities for individuals to participate in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) STEM & Technical Exploring Pathways (STEPS) program, this is a fully integrated training and placement program using the principles of universal design to train and prepare individuals for STEM-based technology jobs in all sectors of in-demand industries.
- Apprenticeship programs and related education requirements including how the STEPS model helps individuals with disabilities breakthrough barriers and enter apprenticeships.
- The relationship among Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners in the apprenticeship programs including the role of:
  - Educational institutions
  - Workforce agencies
  - Industry work-ready training programs
  - The pathways from entry level to advanced employment opportunities
**Ongoing Roles and Responsibilities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QAI Committee Activities</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviews aggregate key indicators for vendor performance by region.</td>
<td>Provides aggregated key indicator reports for vendor performance by region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least one member of the QAI committee will be a representative on the ACCES-VR participant, youth, vendor satisfaction survey development committee.</td>
<td>Shares data collected on participant, youth, and vendor satisfaction surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews data collected from the participant, youth, and vendor satisfaction surveys.</td>
<td>Provides semi-annual summary of fair hearings related to due process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviews semi-annual summary of due process fair hearings.</td>
<td>Shares data related to Impartial Hearing Officers (IHOs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annually initiates Order of Selection metrics report review by the full SRC and makes recommendations for improving ACCES-VR performance.</td>
<td>Shares Order of Selection metrics report.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviews public data to advise on trends and needs within ACCES-VR and the state VR systems.</td>
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Business Engagement Committee:

Purpose:

The Business Engagement Committee advises ACCES-VR on ways to meet the identified priorities to effectively serve businesses in the ACCES-VR section of the NYS WIOA Combined State Plan. These priorities focus on increasing business penetration, increasing repeat services to business customers, and building effective community partnerships to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes.

Committee Accomplishments:

During the 2020-2021 year the Business Engagement Committee coordinated and provided a presentation on the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) – Resources Advocacy and the Job Search. Information and resources provided were:

- An overview of the DEI program which is a jointly funded and administered program by the United States Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration and the Office of Disability Employment Policy.
- The DEI’s purposes includes:
  - Improving educational, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes for adults with disabilities who are unemployed, under-employed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.
  - Improving coordination and collaboration among workforce partners.
  - Building effective community partnerships to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes.
- The role of the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRC):

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<td>Alan Gallagher</td>
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<td>Valarie Gambino-Carelli</td>
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<td>Peter Herrig</td>
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<td>Robert Statham</td>
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- Helping to expand the workforce development system to serve as Employment Networks under the Ticket to Work program.
- Providing services to individuals who have a Ticket to Work Ticket.
- Developing and maintaining partnerships and collaborative activities.
- Helping to ensure job seekers with disabilities have access to all relevant programs.
- Assisting with training Career Center staff and partner staff.
- Assisting in maintaining and ensuring the accessibility of the Career Centers.

**Ongoing Roles and Responsibilities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Engagement Committee Activities</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arranges at least one presentation for the SRC per calendar year on business engagement-related topics to provide information and to make recommendations and advise ACCES-VR.</td>
<td>Provides business engagement data as available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies new and emerging industries that are growing and industries in decline and how these impact career pathways. Relays information on current employment and industry trends to ACCES-VR.</td>
<td>Provides Information on existing business partnerships and initiatives around NYS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annually reviews data on the ACCES-VR priority in the NYS WIOA Combined State Plan for effectively serving business.</td>
<td>Supports business engagement presentations to the SRC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages representatives of business and industry to become members of the SRC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work collaboratively with ACCES-VR to understand the needs of businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Economic Development Councils, and to provide them with a better understanding of ACCES-VR services.</td>
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Annual Report Committee:

Purpose:

The Annual Report Committee coordinates the preparation and submission of the New York State SRC annual report in collaboration with ACCES-VR.

<table>
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<td>Melinda Dolezal</td>
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<td>Jenny Hutkowski</td>
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<td>Anthony Morano</td>
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<td>Lynne Thibudeau</td>
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Committee Accomplishments:

The Annual Report Committee was newly established this year to coordinate and collect the information for the SRC’s annual report. In collaboration with ACCES-VR, the Annual Report Committee developed the process to solicit the committee summaries, artwork, success stories, and data included in the report.

Ongoing Roles and Responsibilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Report Committee Activities</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the quarterly meetings document the work and activities of the SRC.</td>
<td>Provides support in creating a template for the annual report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicits and organizes information from each committee for the report.</td>
<td>Provides Deputy Commissioner’s letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In partnership with ACCES-VR, develops the process to solicit artwork, success stories, and data to include in the report.</td>
<td>Provides ACCES-VR data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborates with ACCES-VR on timely completion of the report.</td>
<td>Assists in soliciting and gathering artwork and success stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides technical support with review of final draft and accessibility requirements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Featured Artists

Artist:
Timothy Dennis-Recent,
Graduate of the New York City College of Technology

This untitled picture was inspired by adventure and wonder. It is a concept piece Timothy created for a children’s book. Shown here is the main character heading out on an adventure with his llama.

Timothy began working with ACCES-VR when he graduated from high school. Through the vocational rehabilitation process, he was provided with a continuum of services and supports resulting in his successful completion of a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts, increasing his job skills and completing an internship and other work experiences.

When speaking with Timothy’s ACCES-VR counselor she said, “Timothy is wonderful to work with, and an amazingly talented artist.” He is now working with an ACCES-VR funded job developer and seeking employment as an Illustrator or Graphic Designer.
Artist:
Aury Meja
Stock Clerk at a Local Natural Food Marketplace

The colored sketching titled, *Colors of Autumn*, was inspired by autumn in New York and the world around the artist. Aury created this piece out of his excitement, energy and hope to be working with ACCES-VR and finding a new job.

Aury’s enjoyment of art began when he was about 5 years old. He continued drawing, coloring, and painting in school and took a media arts course when he was in high school. Aury’s love for art has continued and is something he does for fun.

Aury began working with ACCES-VR in 2017 and has had several jobs in the fast food or retail industries. Through these work experiences he learned these positions were not a good job match for him. He never gave up on finding the right job and in last year he rejoined ACCES-VR seeking supported employment services. While working with ACCES-VR he was provided guidance and counseling and job search supports including interview skills training and instruction in resume writing. Aury shared that within a few weeks of completing his sketch of Autumn Colors, he was interviewed and hired at a local grocery store. He loves this job and when asked what advice he would give to someone trying to get a job he said, “keep looking for what you love, my job is the best.”
Success Stories

Potentially Eligible Student and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Caileen Teige, High School Student

Caileen participated in a pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) work readiness training program for potentially eligible students. This is a service provided to students with disabilities in high school or a postsecondary education or training program. Students with disabilities who have not yet applied or been determined eligible for ACCES-VR services may receive Pre-ETS.

Caileen arrived at her work readiness training class on time every day ready to learn with a notebook and a pencil at hand. Caileen focused on the good qualities that not only make a great employee, but a great human being. Caileen often raised her hand to express how important it is for people to simply be nice to one another. Her enthusiasm helped her virtual class become close knit.

Her mother shared that she enjoyed the instruction on motivation, cooperation, leaving personal business at home and the customer is always right. At home, her family members were impressed with her retention and explanation of the skills and knowledge she has acquired.

Caileen's mother added the following about the services and her daughter’s experience. “Caileen had a wonderful experience participating in the work readiness training program. She was introduced to a whole new world, with steps to prepare herself to enter the workforce and community with confidence. I cannot express how grateful and impressed I was when I heard my daughter speak of work dynamics. She told us the customer is always right. She learned work skills including keeping work professional, how to write a resume, how to reflect on her strengths and interests and to explore areas of work that bring out these skills. The classes re-enforced Caileen’s natural enthusiastic attitude and taught her additional critical thinking strategies, teamwork, networking skills and behavioral expectations of the workplace. Caileen is a hard worker and eager to learn. She rises at 6 A.M. and is ready to start her day. I know when she graduates high school, she will bring these skills and her enthusiasm to a job”.

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Success Stories

Postsecondary Education Leading to Employment

Sarita Vaughn, Business Operations Associate

Sarita began working with ACCES-VR before graduating high school in 2016. She was seeking assistance in reaching her career goals. While supporting Sarita through the vocational process, ACCES-VR provided a variety of services including guidance and counseling, career inventories and support for postsecondary education that was required for her to meet her career goal. Sarita is now employed at a securities firm in New York City.

Like many other young adults, when Sarita started her employment journey there were many new experiences, trials, successes, and obstacles to learn from. Along the way, Sarita discovered she had a passion for finance. It was not just one thing, one support, or one service that helped Sarita achieve her employment goal. Her self-starting personality and hard work, her collaboration and partnership with ACCES-VR and Baruch College, and her internship and work experiences paved the way for her successful completion of a business degree and double major in finance and business. With her college degree in hand Sarita became employed full-time, with benefits, as a Business Operations Associate at a securities firm earning over the NYS median income.

When asked about her experiences, Sarita said, "I am extremely grateful for this job. It allows me to grow every day. Most importantly, I work with an amazing group of people that are patient, understanding and treat me as an equal. The tremendous support I received from ACCES-VR allowed me the opportunity to graduate debt free and discover my passion for finance."
Success Stories

Career Advancement

Michael Thomason, Disability Resource Coordinator

When Michael was in high school, he began working with ACCES-VR. Like many young adults, he was still learning and developing his career interests. He began participating in guidance and counseling with ACCES-VR and when he graduated high school, Michael knew he wanted to advocate for individuals with disabilities, so he set his sights on becoming a lawyer.

Michael worked closely with his ACCES-VR counselor and was provided vocational rehabilitation services such as college training, assistive technology, driver training and vehicle modifications, all requirements for him to complete his training and be able to meet his employment goal of being a lawyer.

During Michael’s time at college, and with ongoing vocational guidance and counseling, his employment goal changed. Michael realized his skills and talents were better suited for a career in the human services field as an advocate for individuals with disabilities. To compliment and continue developing his skills and work experience in the field, he applied for and was hired at the disabilities services office at the college he attended, the New York State University College at New Paltz (SUNY New Paltz). Additionally, Michael pursued and attained training from Cornell University’s Yang Tan Institute on Employment and Disability in benefits advisement and planning.

After graduating, Michael worked part-time at the Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL), an Independent Living Center in the Mid-Hudson. Michael continued to explore employment opportunities and advancement and learned that he could find employment as a Benefits Advisor. Shortly after, ACCES-VR assisted Michael in participating in a work experience development opportunity and a Work-Try-Out at the Ulster County Employment and Training Office. Michael is now employed full-time as a Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC).
Success Stories

The Ability to Have Resilience

Jennifer Fret, Peer Specialist

Finding and keeping a job had become challenging for Jennifer. Work began to feel more stressful and daily responsibilities started to feel overwhelming. She had a very full plate, and realized she had an undiagnosed mental health need in addition to holding down a job and caring for others. Eventually, Jennifer received the support and assistance she needed, and her journey of recovery began.

In 2018 Jennifer began working with ACCES-VR and was provided a Diagnostic Vocational Evaluation (DVE) and guidance and counseling to assist her in identifying an employment goal. She learned about her aptitudes, transferable skills, and career interests. Through this process she identified her strong interest in helping others and developed a vison for her future career. Jennifer now knew she wanted to be a peer specialist and provide support to individuals with behavioral health diagnoses as they journey through their recovery to independence.

Working together with the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and her ACCES-VR counselor, Jennifer received ongoing guidance and counseling, attended an on-line peer specialist training program, participated in a 1000 hours of work experience, and earned her provisional peer specialist certification.

In March of 2020, and at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jennifer was hired as a peer specialist at a behavioral health organization in Queens. She quickly became an integral part of the team, loved her new role, and felt she was making a difference in people’s lives. Initially, she was working onsite and saw herself as a lifeline to other individuals with disabilities. Jennifer was truly in the thick of the pandemic both personally and professionally when New York went on “pause”. As a valued member of the team, Jennifer’s employer worked with her and provided supports and accommodations so she would remain employed and working remotely.

Jennifer sees herself as being a part of the village to help those interested in employment reach their goals. When asked what advice she would give to others seeking employment she said, “I have the ability to have resilience”, and stated she wants others to know, “It’s ok to have illnesses and setbacks, just don’t give up”. She wants people to understand that working does not have to be an unobtainable goal.
Achieving Your Dream Is Possible

Marcus Renna, Library Clerk

For years Marcus worked part-time jobs, at local libraries with no benefits. He was interested in obtaining a full-time, civil service position as a Library Assistant. Marcus took all the civil service exams he was eligible for yet struggled to attain a passing score. The Westchester County Human Resources Department referred Marcus to ACCES-VR to determine if he was eligible for any reasonable accommodations, including the 55-a program. The 55-a program refers to the section of New York State civil service law which allows local governments to hire qualified individuals with a disability to a competitive class position without taking the exam, but rather evaluates their abilities based on interviews, their qualifications, and experiences.

Determined not to give up on his dream, Marcus applied to ACCES-VR, participated in vocational counseling, and completed an evaluation to identify his skills, abilities, and possible eligibility for reasonable accommodations. The evaluation showed Marcus was eligible for reasonable accommodations and the 55-a program. ACCES-VR provided him information on the program, and he reached out to several library directors to discuss it. The Scarsdale Library interviewed Marcus and he was just the right fit for their Library Clerk position. He speaks several languages and would work well with the young people who come to the library. With ACCES-VR, the library staff and the 55-a program, Marcus is now working full-time, receives medical, vision and dental benefits in a position he loves and has opportunities for advancement.

When asked about what working at the library meant to Marcus, he said: “Working at the library has been a truly wonderful experience. You are encouraged to be the very best you can be and reach your full potential. I cannot tell you enough how refreshing it is to work in an environment where your supervisors and co-workers want you to learn and continue to grow as an employee. Make no mistake, ACCES-VR itself is equally devoted to helping you achieve those dreams.”
WIOA in Action: Business Engagement and Creative Collaboration

Businesses are often recognized for their role in hiring people with disabilities, but their journey is often not told. This is a story of how one business owner’s dedication to the inclusion of all people in the workforce has led to creative collaborations, inclusion for all people interested in the industry and the development of a talent pool in manufacturing.

FALA Technologies is a manufacturing plant that hires mechanical engineers and skilled technicians. They work with businesses on the cutting edge of technology to bring future technology from around the globe to manufacturing. FALA’s President, Frank Falatyn, knows he needs skilled workers to move the industry forward and leaves no stone unturned when it comes to developing a talented pipeline of future workers. Frank participates in workforce development activities in any way he can, from being a leader on industry boards to collaborating with local community colleges and career centers on training and recruitment. If there is a workforce initiative Frank is there.

While participating as a judge for a capstone engineering project at the New York State University College at New Paltz, (SUNY New Paltz), he met a young man on the autism spectrum. Frank saw the talent this young man had and reached out to ACCES-VR. With the support of this young man’s family, and ACCES-VR services that included, on-the-job training, job coaching, and youth extended supported employment, Frank supported him to become the first person with a developmental disability to complete a registered apprenticeship in advanced manufacturing. However, this is not just a story about the success of one person, or business, it is about how under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) the workforce development system can change mindsets and focus collaborations on creative ways to support people with all types of abilities to be successful in a career. Frank recognized that to continue to build accessible pathways to train individuals of all abilities, he needed to find experts in supporting the field. He partnered with the Administration for Community Living and a local Independent Living Center and together they have created a fully accessible pre-apprenticeship program for individuals of all abilities to participate in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) & Technical Exploring Pathways the (STEPS) program.
Appendix A
Data Elements

Program Year (PY) 2020-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Year</th>
<th>Employment Outcomes Achieved (Youth*)</th>
<th>Total Served</th>
<th>Youth Served</th>
<th>Student with Disability** Served</th>
<th>ACCES-VR Counselors</th>
<th>Vocational Rehabilitation Program Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>4,415 (2,408 55%)</td>
<td>68,477</td>
<td>42,122</td>
<td>30,299</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>$175,918,675^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>6,709 (3,273 49%)</td>
<td>80,454</td>
<td>46,811</td>
<td>34,022</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>$207,611,166^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>8,089 (3,893 48%)</td>
<td>94,697</td>
<td>52,917</td>
<td>38,464</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>$226,787,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>9,111 (4,324 47%)</td>
<td>95,082</td>
<td>50,956</td>
<td>36,808</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>$223,920,178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Youth is defined as under 25 years old at application
**Student with Disability - student in secondary school with or without an IEP or 504 plan and 16-21 years old at application
^The 2017-21 figures in the column labeled Vocational Rehabilitation Costs includes actual expenditures ONLY.

Data as of 9/1/2021
Data: Individuals and Youth Served

All Participants Served vs. Youth Served

 PY 18-19  PY 19-20  PY 20-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PY 18-19</td>
<td>94,697</td>
<td>52,917</td>
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<tr>
<td>PY 19-20</td>
<td>80,454</td>
<td>46,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PY 20-21</td>
<td>68,477</td>
<td>42,122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All Participants Served: PY 18-19 = 94,697, PY 19-20 = 80,454, PY 20-21 = 68,477
- Youth Served: PY 18-19 = 52,917, PY 19-20 = 46,811, PY 20-21 = 42,122

- Percentage:
  - PY 18-19: All = 55.9%, Youth = 58.2%
  - PY 19-20: All = 58.2%, Youth = 61.5%
**Data: Gender of Individuals Served**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39,955</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28,012</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Data: Categories of Disabilities of Individuals Served

Total Served in PY 2020-21, by Disability as Reported to RSA

- **Cognitive Disabilities** (e.g., Disabilities involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration)
  - 30,540 cases (47.6%)
- **Psychosocial Disabilities** (e.g., interpersonal and behavioral health disabilities, difficulty coping)
  - 16,453 cases (25.6%)
- **Other Psychological**
  - 5,274 cases (8.2%)
- **Physical**
  - 7,631 cases (11.9%)
- **Sensory/Communicative**
  - 4,262 cases (6.6%)
- **No Impairment/Not Yet...**
  - 4,317 cases (6.7%)

---

*Cognitive Disabilities* (e.g., Disabilities involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration)

**Psychosocial Disabilities** (e.g., interpersonal and behavioral health disabilities, difficulty coping)
Data: Characteristics of Individuals Served

Total Served in PY 2020-21, Characteristics

- **Most Significant Disability**: 41,857 cases (61.1%)
- **SSI / SSDI**: 13,290 cases (19.4%)
- **Transition Age Youth**: 42,122 cases (61.5%)
Data: Race/Ethnicity of Individuals Served

Total Served in PY 2020-21, by Race/Ethnicity

- White: 35,088 cases (51.2%)
- Black: 14,298 cases (20.9%)
- One Race & Hispanic: 11,474 cases (16.8%)
- Multiracial: 2,226 cases (3.3%)
- Asian: 1,772 cases (2.6%)
- Native: 363 cases (0.5%)
- Multicultural & Hispanic: 737 cases
- Pacific Islander: 80 cases
- Unspecified: 2,439 cases
Data: Age of Individuals Served

Total Served in PY 2020-21, by Age

- Less than 16: 432 (5.1%)
- Between 16 and 21: 38,217 (55.8%)
- Between 22 and 24: 3,473 (5.1%)
- Between 25 and 34: 9,540 (13.9%)
- Between 35 and 44: 6,601 (9.6%)
- Between 45 and 64: 9,663 (14.1%)
- Greater than 64: 551 (50.1%)
Data: Employment Outcomes of Individuals Served

Employment Outcomes for ACCES-VR Participants in Integrated Settings

Employment outcomes are defined as 90 days of continuous employment.
Data: Employment Outcomes of Youth Served

Employment Outcomes for ACCES-VR Youth Participants in Integrated Settings

Employment outcomes are defined as 90 days of continuous employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PY 2018-19</th>
<th>PY 2019-10</th>
<th>PY 2020-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,896</td>
<td>3,271</td>
<td>2,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employment (except state-agency managed business enterprise)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Employment in Competitive Integrated Environment</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>3,038</td>
<td>2,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Intergrated Employment</td>
<td>3,424</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Self-Employment (except state-agency managed business enterprise)
- Supported Employment in Competitive Integrated Environment
- Competitive Intergrated Employment
- Total
### WIOA Performance Indicators

**ACCES-VR: Program Year 2020-21**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Rate in 2nd Quarter (6 months) After Exit</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Rate in 4th Quarter (1 year) After Exit</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Earnings in 2nd Quarter (6 months) After Exit</td>
<td>$ 4,646.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credential Attainment Rate</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurable Skills Gain (MSG)</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New York State Rehabilitation Council
Members

Ellice Switzer, Chair, representing Business, Industry, and Labor

Joseph M. Delgado, Vice Chair, representing Disability Advocacy Group

Naomi Brickel, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Megan Brown, representing the State Education Agency responsible for the Public Education of Students with Disabilities who are eligible to receive services

Sebastian Chittilappilly, representing Disability Advocacy Groups

Valarie Gambino-Carelli, representing Business, Industry, and Labor

Kathleen Grosvenor, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Nancy Grant, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Jenny Hutkowski, representing Parent Training and Information Centers

Gregory Lau, representing Transition Education Services

Jennifer M. Machucki, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Chana Meir, representing Current or Former Applicant for, or Recipient of, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Anthony Morano, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Hillary Nichols, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Evelyn Pugh, representing Parent Training and Information Centers

Brenda Shannon, representing Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Robert Statham, representing Disability Advocacy Groups

Toni Sullivan, representing Community Rehabilitation Service Providers

Lafayette Williams, representing New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC)
Non-Voting Members, Ex-Officio Members, and State Partners

Melinda Dolezal, representing the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs

Alan Gallagher, representing the New York State Department Labor (DOL) Workforce Investment Board

Peter Herrig, representing the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)

Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, representing the New York State Education Department (SED) Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES)

Andrew Sink, representing the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH)

Lynne Thibudeau, representing the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

ACCES-VR SRC Committee Liaisons

Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, liaison to the SRC for Transition and Youth

Lori Boyd, liaison to the Business Engagement Workforce Development Committee

David Morgan, liaison to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee

Jennifer Semonite, liaison to the Executive, Annual Report, and Membership Committees

Diane Woodward, ACCES-VR Manager Policy, Training and WIOA Implementation supporting the SRC

Page 11. Amoscato, Nick. Photograph of Downtown Brooklyn skyline at the western end of Long Island, the Manhattan Bridge (far left), and the Brooklyn Bridge (near left), seen across the East River from Lower Manhattan. https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/USA/new_york_map.htm


