PROGRAM YEAR 2024 – 2027

NEW YORK STATE COMBINED PLAN

2026 MODIFICATION

CONTENTS

Program Year 2024 – 2027 1

Overview 4

Options for Submitting a State Plan 4

How State Plan Requirements Are Organized 5

I. WIOA State Plan Type And Executive Summary 6

a. WIOA State Plan Type 6

b. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary 8

II. Strategic Elements 8

a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis 9

b. State Strategic Vision and Goals 49

c. State Strategy 56

III. Operational Planning Elements 67

a. State Strategy Implementation 67

b. State Operating Systems And Policies 113

IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs 154

V. Common Assurances (For All Core Programs) 161

VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs 163

Program Specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B 163

Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services) 196

Program-specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs 222

Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General) 238

Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) 283

VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs 404

Trade Adjustment Assistance 404

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) 404

Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs 432

Title I – Adult Program Performance Indicators 432

Title I – Dislocated Worker Program Performance Indicators 432

Title I – Youth Program Performance Indicators 433

Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Performance Indicators 434

Wagner-Peyser Act – Wagner Peyser Program Performance Indicators 434

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators (NYSED/ACCES-VR) 435

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators (OCFS/NYSCB) 435

All WIOA Core Programs PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 436

Other Appendices (Title II) 436

OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan— a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III),
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II-IV of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) [1]
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
    - State Strategy Implementation,
    - State Operating Systems and Policies,

[1] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

- Assurances,
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.[2] States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations.

Paperwork Reduction Act: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a Combined State Plan two-year Modification, which includes Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; Wagner-Peyser Act; Vocational Rehabilitation programs; Trade Adjustment Assistance; and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. Other partner programs listed below, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program, and the Community Services Block Grant program, have their own full State Plan outside of this Combined State Plan, but participate in the planning process for the New York State Combined State Plan and Modifications.

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

[2] Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below. Indicate which Combined State Plan partner program(s) the State is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

Yes

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

No

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

Yes

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

No

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))[3]

No

b. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

This is a required two-year Modification to the Program Year (PY) 2024-2027 Combined State Plan. New York State (NYS) is submitting this Modification to the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the United States Department of Education (USED) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

This Modification outlines strategies to address the unique needs and opportunities of our State's diverse population and regional economies while aligning with federal guidelines. NYS acknowledges this unique moment calls for creating innovative, industry-driven workforce programs while expanding the most tried and true models, including Registered Apprenticeship and other work-based learning models.

The NYS Workforce Development System (System) aims to ensure every business has access to a skilled labor force and that every New Yorker has access to job training opportunities that lead to high quality employment or career advancement. To achieve this vision, NYS has set six (6) comprehensive priorities:

1. Ensure training programs in NYS stay in line with the needs of businesses;
2. Support all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills, accessing support services, and connecting to jobs;
3. Attract, support, and develop businesses in promising and priority industries;
4. Align workforce resources and data collection and hold System partners accountable to standardized success measures;
5. Support existing workers to ensure they remain competitive throughout their career; and
6. Strengthen the long-term pipeline of workers to support the future of work.

Strategies aligned with each priority are listed in the State Strategic Visions and Goals section (II.b.) of this Modification. In-depth economic and workforce analyses, extensive narrative about NYS initiatives and implementation strategies, operating systems and policies, program-specific requirements, and performance metrics are also discussed throughout. There are alphabetized lists at the beginning of sections with high numbers of acronyms.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for

[3] The Reentry Employment Opportunities program (REO), formerly the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (RExO), is referred to by its original name (RExO) in this document. This name change is a recent decision that was not incorporated into WIOA.

aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

a. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

Occupations with Largest Number of Online Postings, New York State, July 2025

Occupation Title	SOC Code	Unique Postings	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
Registered Nurses	29-1141	7,140	$105,602	Bachelor's degree
Retail Salespersons	41-2031	4,753	$37,024	No formal educational credential
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	41-1011	2,912	$57,408	High school diploma or equivalent
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	31-1128	2,567	$37,981	High school diploma or equivalent
Medical and Health Services Managers	11-9111	2,191	$149,822	Bachelor's degree
Customer Service Representatives	43-4051	2,109	$47,840	High school diploma or equivalent
General and Operations Managers	11-1021	2,088	$130,000	Bachelor's degree
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and	41-4012	1,973	$76,565	High school diploma or equivalent

Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products				
Financial Managers	11-3031	1,969	$215,738	Bachelor's degree
Software Developers	15-1252	1,899	$161,262	Bachelor's degree

Source: The Conference Board®–Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® (HWOL)
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns

- These top ten (10) occupations represent a broad range of industries, including Health Care, Retail Trade, Management, and Information Technology; and
- Each of these ten (10) occupations had more than 1,800 online jobs postings in NYS in July 2025.

Industry Sectors with Largest Number of Online Postings, New York State, July 2025

Industry Sector	NAICS Code	Unique Postings
Health Care and Social Assistance	62	24,904
Retail Trade	44-45	14,909
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	54	12,877
Finance and Insurance	52	9,416
Educational Services	61	8,736
Manufacturing	31-33	7,170
Administrative and Support Services	56	6,947
Accommodation and Food Services	72	5,886
Information	51	4,147
Wholesale Trade	42	3,904

Source: The Conference Board®–Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® (HWOL)
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns. Roughly one-quarter of NYS's online job postings do not have an industry assigned.

Occupations with Largest Number of Online Postings, Upstate New York, July 2025

Rank	Occupation Title	SOC Code	Unique Postings	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
1	Registered Nurses	29-1141	4,137	$94,789	Bachelor's degree
2	Retail Salespersons	41-2031	2,839	$34,581	No formal educational credential
3	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	41-1011	1,710	$52,021	High school diploma or equivalent
4	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	31-1128	1,269	$38,047	High school diploma or equivalent
5	Customer Service Representatives	43-4051	1,258	$44,644	Bachelor's degree
6	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	53-3032	1,187	$57,954	High school diploma or equivalent

7	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	37-2011	1,130	$36,632	Bachelor's degree
8	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	29-2061	1,028	$60,405	High school diploma or equivalent
9	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	25-9045	962	$35,057	Bachelor's degree
10	Medical and Health Services Managers	11-9111	906	$130,155	Bachelor's degree
Total Postings (Top 10)			**16,426**		
Total Postings (Upstate Region)			**74,095**		

Source: The Conference Board®–Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® (HWOL)
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns

Occupations with Largest Number of Online Postings, Downstate New York, July 2025

Rank	Occupation Title	SOC Code	Unique Postings	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
1	Registered Nurses	29-1141	2,934	$115,522	Bachelor's degree
2	Retail Salespersons	41-2031	1,902	$40,318	No formal educational credential
3	Financial Managers	11-3031	1,468	$238,270	High school diploma or equivalent
4	Software Developers	15-1252	1,415	$176,368	Bachelor's degree
5	Marketing Managers	11-2021	1,333	$186,309	Bachelor's degree
6	General and Operations Managers	11-1021	1,324	$147,075	High school diploma or equivalent
7	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	31-1128	1,288	$38,582	Bachelor's degree
8	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Mfg., Ex. Technical and Sci. Products	41-4012	1,254	$77,067	High school diploma or equivalent
9	Medical and Health Services Managers	11-9111	1,250	$161,419	Bachelor's degree
10	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	41-1011	1,194	$58,660	High school diploma or equivalent
Total Postings (Top 10)			**15,362**		
Total Postings (Downstate Region)			**77,642**		

Source: The Conference Board®–Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® (HWOL)
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns

A regional breakdown of online job postings provides a more nuanced look at how job titles in demand differ between downstate (New York City & Long Island) and upstate (balance of NYS). Among our findings:

- More than half of the top ten (10) downstate postings are in high-paying, white-collar jobs concentrated in the Management and Computer and Mathematical occupational categories.

- The mix of top ten (10) online postings in the upstate area is more diverse than the downstate list and is dominated by middle-skills jobs such as Customer Service Representatives and Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses. The list also includes blue-collar titles such as Janitors, Cleaners and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers.
- The quantity of online postings in the downstate area (77,642) is greater than the number in the upstate area (74,095).

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

Selected Emerging Industries, New York State

NAICS Code	Industry Title	2020 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Net Change	% Change
237	Heavy & Civil Engineering Construction	30,654	34,427	3,773	12.3%
3254	Pharmaceutical & Medicine Mfg.	22,964	24,713	1,749	7.6%
3344	Semiconductor & Other Electronic Component Mfg.	16,526	17,123	597	3.6%
5132	Software Publishers	27,059	37,321	10,262	37.9%
62133	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (Except Physicians)	7,363	15,649	8,286	112.5%

Source: Employment data are from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) and employment projections are from Lightcast™

Analysts from NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research identified five (5) emerging industries in NYS (included in the chart above), based on two (2) principal factors:

1. Employment growth between 2020 and 2024; and
2. Statewide market trends observations.

These industries span four (4) broad industry sectors:

1. Construction;
2. Manufacturing;
3. Information; and
4. Health Care and Social Assistance.

The five (5) emerging industries had total combined Statewide employment of 129,233 in 2024. The two (2) largest sectors on this list were Software Publishers (NAICS Industry 5132 with 37,321 jobs in 2024) and Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (NAICS Industry 237 with 34,427 jobs in 2024).

The following section includes a brief profile and the top five (5) occupations (i.e., staffing patterns) for each emerging industry. In general, employment in these emerging industries is relatively concentrated, with the top five (5) occupations accounting for anywhere from 39% to 80% of overall industry employment.

Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (NAICS 237)

Top 5 Occupations in the Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction Industry

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Share of Industry Employment	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
47-2061	Construction Laborers	24.5%	$84,774	No formal educational credential
47-2073	Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Operators	8.9%	$132,803	High school diploma or equivalent
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades & Extraction Workers	7.5%	$107,427	High school diploma or equivalent
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	4.0%	$115,147	Bachelor's degree
47-2031	Carpenters	3.9%	$122,182	High school diploma or equivalent
Total, Top 5 Occupations		**48.8%**		

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey.

Within the broader Construction industry sector, Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (NAICS Industry 237) is an often-overlooked segment. Although construction activity in general tends to be cyclical, publicly funded projects to update and replace aging infrastructure including bridges, tunnels, and water systems, provide a stable employment base and drive growth in heavy construction.

Additionally, NYS has experienced significant infrastructure damage in recent years due to extreme weather events like Superstorm Sandy, Hurricanes Irene and Ida, and Tropical Storm Henri. The need to better prepare for future risks by incorporating design features that protect against damage from flooding, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts, will drive more rapid growth in heavy construction in the future.

Many of the occupations that comprise this industry are heavily unionized and require no more than a high school diploma, followed by a Registered Apprenticeship program or On-the-Job Training.

Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing (NAICS 3254)

Top 5 Occupations in the Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing Industry

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Share of Industry Employment	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	14.8%	$37,194	High school diploma or equivalent
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	8.4%	$47,048	High school diploma

				or equivalent
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	8.4%	$63,275	High school diploma or equivalent
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	5.1%	$83,450	High school diploma or equivalent
51-9041	Extruding, Forming, Pressing, and Compacting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	4.9%	$66,581	High school diploma or equivalent
Total, Top 5 Occupations		**41.6%**		

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey

Since 2020, the Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing (NAICS Industry 3254) industry has been the largest employer within the Manufacturing sector in NYS. Companies in the industry employed 24,713 workers in 2024 in NYS, with an average annual wage of $113,100, 18% above NYS's average.

Nearly half the employment in the industry is located on Long Island, which is home to a growing cluster of companies making generic pharmaceuticals and supplements. Generic and store-brand drugs have become popular with consumers looking to reduce health care costs while the COVID-19 pandemic led to greater demand for vitamins and other nutraceuticals.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturing is also a key component of NYS's Biotech and Life Sciences cluster. In the Hudson Valley, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals is planning a $1.8B campus expansion project which includes labs for clinical research and manufacturing and development suites. The expansion is expected to create around 1,000 permanent positions. Pfizer has also announced plans to expand its Vaccine Research and Development facilities in Pearl River, which will create lab capacity for up to 370 additional staff.

The industry's companies provide good jobs, including a high concentration using Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills, to employees at every level of educational attainment, from high school to the doctoral level. However, company executives have reported that they are struggling to find an adequate supply of qualified, available workers to help them grow and stay competitive.

Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing (NAICS 3344)

Top 5 Occupations in the Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing Industry

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Share of Industry Employment	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education

51-2028	Electrical, Electronic & Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	17.3%	$41,716	High school diploma or equivalent
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	7.1%	$102,017	Bachelor's degree
17-3023	Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technologists, and Technicians	5.3%	$64,052	Associate's degree
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	5.0%	$50,752	High school diploma or equivalent
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, and Hand	2.8%	$58,071	No formal educational credential
Total, Top 5 Occupations		**37.5%**		

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey

As the reliance on computers and memory chips has increased, this had led to greater demand for semiconductor manufacturing. Almost every device or product used daily contains some type of electronic chip, from cars, cellphones, and dishwashers to military defense systems. The Pandemic also drew attention to the need for more domestic computer chip manufacturing as supply chain issues intensified. The federal Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semi-Conductors and Science Act (CHIPS) and NYS's Green CHIPS program provide extensive financial incentives for businesses to produce semiconductors in NYS.

Micron Technology Inc. is investing $100B over 20 years to build a large computer memory chip manufacturing campus at the White Pine Commerce Park in Clay (Onondaga County). The facility will create 9,000 direct jobs and an additional 40,000 ancillary jobs. Micron's development project is the largest private sector investment in NYS's history. Outside of Central New York, many other NYS cities along the Thruway corridor are experiencing growth in the semiconductor manufacturing sector, including major investments in the Capital Region, Hudson Valley Region, and Mohawk Valley Region.

The employment level in the Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing (NAICS Industry 3344) sector is projected to grow in NYS. A diverse range of skilled, technical occupations make up this sector, including many STEM-related jobs.

Software Publishers (NAICS 5132)

Top 5 Occupations in the Software Publishers Industry

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Share of Industry Employment	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
15-1252	Software Developers	26.9%	$164,103	Bachelor's degree
11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	7.3%	$231,237	Bachelor's degree
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	6.7%	$138,224	High school diploma or equivalent

13-1082	Project Management Specialists	4.7%	$114,213	Bachelor's degree
15-1253	Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	3.9%	$97,558	Bachelor's degree
Total, Top 5 Occupations		**49.5%**		

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey

Between 2020 and 2024, employment in the Software Publishers (NAICS Industry 5132) industry grew by 37.9%. Economic development initiatives, such as START-UP NY, have created opportunities for start-ups in this industry to thrive. In addition, businesses and consumers continue to purchase mobile devices and computers, which further fuels growth in the Software Publishers industry.

As we continue to progress in the digital age, cyber security has become increasingly important. Cyber security is the practice of protecting computers, servers, mobile devices, electronic systems, and data from malicious attacks. Many businesses, such as LogRythm and Tripwire, provide cyber security services and functions that are found in the Software Publishers industry.

Businesses in this industry tend to pay their workers very well. In 2024, the annual average wage for workers in the Software Publishers industry was $196,800. This was more than double the $95,700 annual average wage for all industries in NYS.

Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (Except Physicians) (NAICS 62133)

Top 5 Occupations in the Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (Except Physicians) Industry

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Share of Industry Employment	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	30.3%	$69,447	Bachelor's degree
21-1023	Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers	23.4%	$99,806	Master's degree
19-3033	Clinical & Counseling Psychologists	15.3%	$108,440	Doctoral or professional degree
43-6014	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	6.6%	$47,369	High school diploma or equivalent
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	4.1%	$46,300	Some college, no degree
Total, Top 5 Occupations		**79.7%**		

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey

In recent years, there has been a growing consciousness surrounding mental health, which has helped to reduce the stigmas associated with mental health conditions. This shift in societal attitudes means more people are now seeking assistance for their mental health challenges, which in turn has surged the demand for mental health professionals. Numerous factors exacerbate mental health conditions, such as social media engagement and increasing feelings of isolation. Other elements, like genetic predisposition and prior health complications, also serve as significant contributors.

Within NYS, a growing concern for mental health is mirrored in its labor market dynamics. The Mental Health industry saw its employment figures soar, more than doubling the number of jobs from 7,363 in 2020 to 15,649 in 2024. Projected trends suggest that this trajectory will continue, with the Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Physicians) (NAICS Industry 62133) industry anticipated to grow further.

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

Identifying the employment needs of businesses in NYS requires developing and maintaining current business customer relationships. It is imperative to understand businesses' needs and desires from their perspective, including how they currently interact with the System. To do this, NYSDOL issues an annual Statewide Business survey, which give businesses a platform to identify their own employment needs, including the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for their available jobs. The results of the survey are expounded on throughout this Plan and they align with the data compiled from O*NET in the tables below.

Among the "in-demand" occupations, or the ten (10) existing demand occupations and the 25 emerging demand occupations identified at the Statewide level, the following knowledge, skills and abilities competencies were found to be the most important.

Top 5 Most Important Knowledge Competencies Among In-Demand Occupations

Rank	Knowledge Competency	Weighted Average Importance*
1	Customer and Personal Service	4.02
2	English Language	3.79
3	Administration and Management	3.38
4	Mathematics	3.30
5	Administrative	3.10

**On a 1-5 rating scale, weighted by share of in-demand employment.*
*Sources: "O*NET 28.0 Database." O*NET Resource Center, National Center for O*NET Development and NYSDOL.*

According to O*NET, the top five (5) knowledge competencies are defined as follows:

1. Customer and Personal Service – Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services, including customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction;
2. English Language – Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar;
3. Administration and Management – Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership techniques, production methods, and coordination of people and resources;
4. Mathematics – Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications; and

5. Administrative – Knowledge of administrative and office procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography, transcription, designing forms, and workplace terminology.

Top 5 Most Important Skills Competencies Among In-Demand Occupations

Rank	Skills Competency	Weighted Average Importance*
1	Active Listening	3.75
2	Speaking	3.66
3	Critical Thinking	3.46
4	Reading Comprehension	3.46
5	Social Perceptiveness	3.34

**On a 1-5 rating scale, weighted by share of in-demand employment.*
*Sources: O*NET 28.0 Database." O*NET Resource Center, National Center for O*NET Development and NYSDOL.*

According to O*NET, the top five (5) skills competencies are defined as follows:

1. Active Listening – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times;
2. Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively;
3. Critical Thinking – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems;
4. Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents; and
5. Social Perceptiveness – Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

Top 5 Most Important Abilities Competencies Among In-Demand Occupations

Rank	Abilities Competency	Weighted Average Importance*
1	Oral Comprehension	3.86
2	Oral Expression	3.82
3	Speech Clarity	3.59
4	Speech Recognition	3.54
5	Problem Sensitivity	3.53

**On a 1-5 rating scale, weighted by share of in-demand employment.*
*Sources: "O*NET 28.0 Database." O*NET Resource Center, National Center for O*NET Development and NYSDOL.*

According to O*NET, the top five (5) abilities competencies are defined as follows:

1. Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences;

2. Oral Expression – The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand;
3. Speech Clarity – The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you;
4. Speech Recognition – The ability to identify and understand the speech of another person; and
5. Problem Sensitivity – The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

In-Demand Occupations Licensed and Certified by New York State

SOC Code	Occupational Title	Employment (2024)	License/Certification	Median Wage, $	Typical Entry-Level Education
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	31,010	Nursing Home Administrator	$152,599	Bachelor's degree
19-3033	Clinical & Counseling Psychologists	7,190	Licensed Behavior Analyst Licensed Psychoanalyst Psychologist	$102,630	Doctoral or professional degree
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder & Mental Health Counselors	22,450	Credentialed Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Counselor Credentialed Prevention Professional/Specialist Licensed Mental Health Counselor	$63,758	Bachelor's degree
21-1023	Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers	14,180	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	$82,408	Master's degree
29-1141	Registered Nurses	204,120	Clinical Nurse Specialist Registered Professional Nurse	$108,470	Bachelor's degree

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey and Occupations Licensed and Certified by NYS (dol.ny.gov/occupations-licensed-and-certified-nys)

Strong business customer relationships are required to understand the complex and dynamic economic environment that drives business needs in NYS. Business Services Representatives (BSRs) develop and maintain these relationships through targeted daily outreach across multiple lead sources. Foremost among these is analysis of existing business demand based on current job openings posted on the NYS Job Bank. In addition, analyses of Labor Market Information (LMI) on emerging business demand and business needs identified through the Regional Economic Development Council strategic planning are used to target business outreach efforts.

The NYS Career Center System served 29,676 businesses in Calendar Year 2024. Employment needs identified by these business customers include providing LMI, layoff aversion planning, and various recruiting services. The most common services used to assist the business in recruiting candidates are job postings, talent pipeline development, customized recruitments, and career fairs. In 2024, NYSDOL held 243 in-person career fairs and 136 in-person customized recruitment events. In-person career fairs and recruitment events served over 5,000* businesses and over 30,000* job seekers in 2024.

***Note:** Numbers are not unique for in-person events as many businesses and job seekers participate in multiple events.

NYSDOL continues to hold career fairs and customized recruitments virtually. In 2024, NYSDOL held 111 virtual events serving over 1,300 unique businesses and over 35,000 unique job seekers. In addition to regional events, specialized virtual events included:

- I LOVE NY Upstate Tourism;
- I LOVE NY Downstate Tourism;
- Statewide I LOVE NY Tourism; and
- Career Opportunities in NYS for Newcomers.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the state.

Since reaching a record high unemployment rate of 16.7% in May 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the New York State (NYS) economy lost over 1.92M private sector jobs, the NYS unemployment rate has decreased by 12.7% to 4.0% as of July 2025.

Demographics of the Civilian Labor Force Ages 16+: New York State and Labor Market Regions

	New York State	Capital Region	Central New York	Finger Lakes	Hudson Valley	Long Island
Total, 16 years and over:						
Population	16,235,440	924,078	637,415	997,963	1,919,755	2,372,417
Civilian Labor Force	10,200,538	581,066	392,183	619,590	1,218,980	1,555,072
Labor Force Participation Rate	62.8%	62.9%	61.5%	62.1%	63.5%	65.5%
Employed	9,568,411	553,516	371,768	590,199	1,150,759	1,482,160
Unemployed	632,127	27,550	20,415	29,391	68,221	72,912
Unemployment Rate	6.2%	4.7%	5.2%	4.7%	5.6%	4.7%
By gender:						

Male						
Population	7,839,687	453,848	310,419	486,649	939,909	1,161,978
Civilian Labor Force	5,243,574	298,262	200,234	317,089	635,766	822,928
Labor Force Participation Rate	66.9%	65.7%	64.5%	65.2%	67.6%	70.8%
Employed	4,903,244	283,956	189,487	300,720	598,609	782,782
Unemployed	340,330	14,306	10,747	16,369	37,157	40,146
Unemployment Rate	6.5%	4.8%	5.4%	5.2%	5.8%	4.9%
Female						
Population	8,395,753	470,230	326,996	511,314	979,846	1,210,439
Civilian Labor Force	4,956,964	282,804	191,949	302,501	583,214	732,144
Labor Force Participation Rate	59.0%	60.1%	58.7%	59.2%	59.5%	60.5%
Employed	4,665,167	269,560	182,281	289,479	552,150	699,378
Unemployed	291,797	13,244	9,668	13,022	31,064	32,766
Unemployment Rate	5.9%	4.7%	5.0%	4.3%	5.3%	4.5%
By race or ethnicity:						
White alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos						
Population	9,514,588	758,132	536,576	802,533	1,236,152	1,576,123
Civilian Labor Force	5,940,758	472,390	330,468	498,003	760,283	999,451
Labor Force Participation Rate	62.4%	62.3%	61.6%	62.1%	61.5%	63.4%
Employed	5,648,192	453,662	314,769	478,527	721,563	955,311
Unemployed	292,566	18,728	15,699	19,476	38,720	44,140
Unemployment Rate	4.9%	4.0%	4.8%	3.9%	5.1%	4.4%
Black or African American alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos						
Population	2,358,067	61,907	42,545	93,141	222,791	218,445
Civilian Labor Force	1,442,878	38,494	24,939	54,933	143,862	150,654
Labor Force Participation Rate	61.2%	62.2%	58.6%	59.0%	64.6%	69.0%
Employed	1,309,801	34,088	22,542	49,901	134,062	141,499
Unemployed	133,077	4,406	2,397	5,032	9,800	9,155
Unemployment Rate	9.2%	11.4%	9.6%	9.2%	6.8%	6.1%
Asian alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos						
Population	1,467,687	36,021	16,911	26,397	91,416	178,583
Civilian Labor Force	941,853	24,877	9,989	17,000	60,540	118,586
Labor Force Participation Rate	64.2%	69.1%	59.1%	64.4%	66.2%	66.4%
Employed	889,734	23,852	9,341	16,362	57,971	113,658
Unemployed	52,119	1,025	648	638	2,569	4,928
Unemployment Rate	5.5%	4.1%	6.5%	3.8%	4.2%	4.2%
Other Race, Including Hispanics or Latinos						
Population	2,895,098	68,018	41,383	75,892	369,396	399,266
Civilian Labor Force	1,875,049	45,305	26,787	49,654	254,295	286,381
Labor Force Participation Rate	64.8%	66.6%	64.7%	65.4%	68.8%	71.7%
Employed	1,720,684	41,914	25,116	45,409	237,163	271,692
Unemployed	154,365	3,391	1,671	4,245	17,132	14,689
Unemployment Rate	8.2%	7.5%	6.2%	8.5%	6.7%	5.1%
Hispanic or Latino						
Population	2,980,360	46,241	25,303	68,045	392,966	437,879
Civilian Labor Force	1,919,180	31,014	15,828	44,225	271,998	315,066
Labor Force Participation Rate	64.4%	67.1%	62.6%	65.0%	69.2%	72.0%
Employed	1,762,475	28,701	14,525	40,060	253,130	300,614
Unemployed	156,705	2,313	1,303	4,165	18,868	14,452
Unemployment Rate	8.2%	7.5%	8.2%	9.4%	6.9%	4.6%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables B23001, C23002A, C23002B, C23002D, C23002I.

Demographics of the Civilian Labor Force Ages 16+: New York State and Labor Market Regions (Continued)

	Mohawk Valley	New York City	North Country	Southern Tier	Western New York
Total, 16 years and over:					
Population	394,399	6,960,966	342,598	527,563	1,158,286
Civilian Labor Force	228,368	4,408,428	185,297	303,690	707,864
Labor Force Participation Rate	57.9%	63.3%	54.1%	57.6%	61.1%
Employed	217,656	4,070,496	175,402	285,033	671,422
Unemployed	10,712	337,932	9,895	18,657	36,442
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	7.7%	5.3%	6.1%	5.1%
By gender:					
Male					
Population	194,733	3,292,502	177,214	260,315	562,120
Civilian Labor Force	118,703	2,233,478	97,048	158,280	361,786
Labor Force Participation Rate	61.0%	67.8%	54.8%	60.8%	64.4%
Employed	113,105	2,053,919	91,420	147,347	341,899
Unemployed	5,598	179,559	5,628	10,933	19,887
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	8.0%	5.8%	6.9%	5.5%
Female					
Population	199,666	3,668,464	165,384	267,248	596,166
Civilian Labor Force	109,665	2,174,950	88,249	145,410	346,078
Labor Force Participation Rate	54.9%	59.3%	53.4%	54.4%	58.1%
Employed	104,551	2,016,577	83,982	137,686	329,523
Unemployed	5,114	158,373	4,267	7,724	16,555
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	7.3%	4.8%	5.3%	4.8%
By race or ethnicity:					
White alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos					
Population	345,506	2,559,322	305,619	457,148	937,477
Civilian Labor Force	200,840	1,668,603	169,625	265,130	575,965
Labor Force Participation Rate	58.1%	65.2%	55.5%	58.0%	61.4%
Employed	192,117	1,571,716	160,890	249,959	549,678
Unemployed	8,723	96,887	8,735	15,171	26,287
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	5.8%	5.1%	5.7%	4.6%
Black or African American alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos					
Population	13,524	1,566,862	11,528	18,613	108,711
Civilian Labor Force	6,386	948,273	2,967	9,683	62,687
Labor Force Participation Rate	47.2%	60.5%	25.7%	52.0%	57.7%
Employed	5,732	853,777	2,721	8,400	57,079
Unemployed	654	94,496	n/a	1,283	5,608
Unemployment Rate	10.2%	10.0%	n/a	13.3%	8.9%
Asian alone, Including Hispanics or Latinos					
Population	8,744	1,049,106	4,172	20,706	35,631
Civilian Labor Force	5,415	671,301	2,115	10,758	21,272
Labor Force Participation Rate	61.9%	64.0%	50.7%	52.0%	59.7%
Employed	5,171	631,012	2,013	10,135	20,219
Unemployed	n/a	40,289	n/a	623	1,053
Unemployment Rate	n/a	6.0%	n/a	5.8%	5.0%
Other Race, Including Hispanics or Latinos					
Population	26,625	1,785,676	21,279	31,096	76,467
Civilian Labor Force	15,727	1,120,251	10,590	18,119	47,940
Labor Force Participation Rate	59.1%	62.7%	49.8%	58.3%	62.7%
Employed	14,636	1,013,991	9,778	16,539	44,446
Unemployed	1,091	106,260	812	1,580	3,494
Unemployment Rate	6.9%	9.5%	7.7%	8.7%	7.3%
Hispanic or Latino					

Population	20,943	1,899,382	12,485	19,849	57,267
Civilian Labor Force	12,516	1,175,797	5,516	11,090	36,130
Labor Force Participation Rate	59.8%	61.9%	44.2%	55.9%	63.1%
Employed	11,523	1,065,229	5,043	10,066	33,584
Unemployed	993	110,568	473	1,024	2,546
Unemployment Rate	7.9%	9.4%	8.6%	9.2%	7.0%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables B23001, C23002A, C23002B, C23002D, C23002I.

The tables above show demographics of the civilian labor force by labor market region based on 2019-2023 five (5)-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates.

Looking at the estimates by gender, the labor force participation rate for males in NYS is 66.9%, compared to 59.0% for females. The labor force participation rate is higher for males throughout all ten (10) regions of NYS. The unemployment rate for males in NYS is 6.5%, compared to 5.9% for females.

Note: The ACS questionnaire asks one (1) question about a person's sex to better understand demographic characteristics. Male or female are the only respondent choices.[4]

Across race/ethnicity groups, the White alone group has the lowest unemployment rate (4.9%), while the Black or African American alone group has the highest unemployment rate (9.2%). Hispanic or Latinos have an unemployment rate of 8.2%. The Long Island region has the highest labor force participation rate among Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino groups.

Note: Race groups include those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race so these groups may overlap.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

Three (3) industries – Private Education and Health Services (+123,400), Government (+27,600), and Leisure and Hospitality (+27,400) – are responsible for more than 93% of the total nonfarm sector job growth in NYS from July 2024 to July 2025.

Of NYS's ten (10) labor market regions, Central New York (+3.1%) and New York City (+2.2%) added jobs at a faster pace than NYS (+1.6%) since July 2024. Other regions that saw their private sector jobs grow by more than the national rate of 1.0% since July 2024 include Mohawk Valley (+1.6%), Western New York (+1.5%), Hudson Valley (+1.4%), and Southern Tier (+1.2%). Over the same period, Finger Lakes (+0.9%), Capital Region (+0.7%), and Long Island (+0.5%) gained jobs at the slower pace of all the gaining regions. The North Country (-1.1%) lost private sector jobs.

In July 2025, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.8% in New York City and 3.4% in the balance of NYS. At that time, New York City's rate remained above its pre-pandemic level (4.3%) while the balance of NYS was below (4.0%). Between July 2024 and July 2025, the not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in New York City decreased from 4.8% to 4.6%, as did the balance of NYS, declining from 3.9% to 3.7% over the same timeframe.

The table below shows the change in unemployment rates by labor market region between July 2024 and July 2025 (not seasonally adjusted). Five (5) regions (Central New York, Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, North Country, and Western New York) tied for the biggest drop (-0.2%). Of the remaining five (5) regions, two (2) experienced a slightly smaller drop (Capital Region and Southern

[4] https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/sex/

Tier), two (2) held constant (Hudson Valley and Long Island), and New York City's unemployment rate went up (+0.4%).

Unemployment Rates, New York State, by region, July 2024 and July 2025
(Not seasonally adjusted)

Region	July 2024	July 2025	Change (Percentage Points)
Capital	3.6	3.4	-0.2
Central New York	3.9	3.7	-0.2
Finger Lakes	3.9	3.7	-0.2
Hudson Valley	3.7	3.5	-0.2
Long Island	3.8	3.6	-0.2
Mohawk Valley	4.1	4	-0.1
New York City	6.1	5.7	-0.4
North Country	4.2	4.2	0
Southern Tier	4	3.9	-0.1
Western New York	4.3	4.1	-0.2

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns.

The not seasonally adjusted labor force participation rate in New York City was unchanged at 62.2% and the balance of NYS region decreased from 61.3% to 60.7% since July 2024. Correspondingly, the size of the labor force is up by nearly 18,000 in New York City and down by over 54,300 in the balance of NYS.

Businesses in a variety of industries in NYS continue to report some level of difficulty in filling their job openings. Some of the most in-demand titles include Registered Nurses; Retail Salespersons; Software Developers; Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products; Managers, All Other; and First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers.

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

Veteran Status for Population Age 18+: New York State

	Veteran	Non-Veteran
Population, Age 18+ (in 1000s)	650.2	14,634.5
Gender		
Male	91.2%	46.2%
Female	8.8%	53.8%
Age		
18 to 34 Years	5.2%	29.2%
35 to 54 Years	19.0%	32.1%
55 Years and Over	75.7%	38.7%
Educational Attainment		
Less than High School	4.2%	10.1%

HS Diploma/HSE Diploma	34.6%	28.0%
Some College or Associate Degree	30.7%	21.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	30.5%	40.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
White, not Hispanic or Latino	78.1%	55.2%
Black, not Hispanic or Latino	9.6%	14.0%
Asian, not Hispanic or Latino	1.7%	10.9%
Other, not Hispanic or Latino	1.1%	1.8%
Hispanic or Latino	9.4%	18.1%

Source: 2024 Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Average

Veterans in NYS are much more likely to be over the age of 55 compared to non-veterans. They are more likely to have a high school or high school equivalency diploma or some college or an associate degree than the general population, but less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational Attainment for Population Age 25+: New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area	Population Age 25+	Less Than High School Diploma	High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	Some College or Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
New York State	13,996,138	12.1%	24.6%	23.8%	22.0%	17.5%
Capital	786,974	7.4%	25.8%	27.7%	21.3%	17.8%
Central NY	535,340	8.7%	28.1%	30.3%	18.3%	14.5%
Finger Lakes	855,021	8.8%	26.5%	28.9%	20.1%	15.8%
Hudson Valley	1,637,043	10.2%	22.4%	23.5%	22.9%	21.0%
Long Island	2,042,350	8.7%	23.0%	24.2%	23.9%	20.2%
Mohawk Valley	335,184	10.2%	32.2%	31.5%	14.9%	11.2%
New York City	6,090,653	16.3%	23.0%	19.7%	23.6%	17.4%
North Country	285,748	10.3%	33.6%	30.5%	14.2%	11.4%
Southern Tier	431,796	8.3%	31.1%	28.9%	16.1%	15.6%
Western NY	996,029	8.0%	28.5%	30.3%	18.5%	14.7%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B15002.

The above table presents information on the educational attainment of NYS's population age 25 and older. Of NYS's population (age 25+), 63.3% have at least some college or an associate degree, including 22.0% who have a bachelor's degree, and another 17.5% who hold a graduate or professional (i.e., medical or law) degree.

Looking at NYS's labor market regions, populations in the Hudson Valley (43.9%) and Long Island (44.1%) have the highest share with at least a bachelor's degree. In contrast, the North Country (25.6%) and the Mohawk Valley (26.1%) have the smallest share.

Conversely, 16.3% of New York City's population (age 25+) has less than a high school diploma. This reflects, in part, the large share of the New York City's population that is foreign born. The Capital (7.4%) and Western NY (8.0%) regions have the smallest share of population with less than a high school diploma.

Despite having a highly educated population and a readily available talent pool, many businesses in NYS are still having trouble finding workers with the skills they require. This suggests that Local

Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) need to continue working closely with businesses to develop the skills that are in demand.

Around one (1) in eight (8) New Yorkers do not have a high school diploma. Anecdotal accounts suggest that many businesses will not consider a job applicant, even for the lowest-level positions, unless the applicant has a high school diploma.

Another barrier facing many workers in NYS, especially those without a high school diploma, is a lack of English proficiency. This can frequently be attributed to the large number of foreign-born residents in NYS. Therefore, it is critical for any workforce development plan to implement a strategy to increase the percentage of potential employees with a high school diploma, as well as provide English as a Second Language programs.

School Status of Population Age 16-19 (in 1000s): New York State and Labor Market Regions

				Not Enrolled in School	Not Enrolled in School	Not Enrolled in School
Area	**Population Age 16-19**	**Enrolled in School**	**Not Enrolled in School**	**High School Graduate**	**Not High School Graduate**	**Age 16-19 Population Not Enrolled in School and Not a High School Graduate (%)**
New York State	982.2	862.0	120.2	88.3	32.0	3.3%
Capital	58.2	50.9	7.3	5.4	2.0	3.4%
Central NY	48.1	43.0	5.1	3.8	1.2	2.6%
Finger Lakes	65.3	55.7	9.6	6.6	3.0	4.6%
Hudson Valley	131.2	115.5	15.7	12.1	3.7	2.8%
Long Island	149.8	134.1	15.8	12.8	3.0	2.0%
Mohawk Valley	26.8	22.1	4.7	3.1	1.6	6.0%
New York City	363.6	322.3	41.3	29.6	11.8	3.2%
North Country	23.9	18.9	5.1	3.6	1.4	5.9%
Southern Tier	42.2	36.5	5.7	4.0	1.8	4.2%
Western NY	73.0	63.1	9.9	7.4	2.5	3.5%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B14005.

Among the nearly 1M NYS youth aged 16-19, about 32,000, or 3.3%, are not enrolled in school and did not graduate from high school. Almost 40% of the youth (36.8%) in this category reside in New York City. As noted in the discussion above, individuals without a high school diploma are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to finding a job in today's labor market. The share of this age group not in school and without a high school degree ranges from a high of 6% in the Mohawk Valley to a low of 2% on Long Island.

Civilian Population with a Disability (in 1000s): New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area	Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population	With a Disability	No Disability	Percent with a Disability

New York State	19,674.2	2,395.0	17,279.3	12.2%
Capital	1,093.2	143.8	949.3	13.2%
Central NY	769.8	108.0	661.9	14.0%
Finger Lakes	1,198.4	174.3	1,024.1	14.5%
Hudson Valley	2,363.5	261.7	2,101.8	11.1%
Long Island	2,895.9	279.4	2,616.5	9.6%
Mohawk Valley	472.9	73.1	399.9	15.5%
New York City	8,460.2	988.8	7,471.5	11.7%
North Country	395.7	65.7	329.9	16.6%
Southern Tier	625.7	96.7	529.0	15.5%
Western NY	1,398.9	203.5	1,195.4	14.5%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1810.

The table above presents information on the number and share of the overall civilian noninstitutionalized population with a disability. Note that demographic information on the skill level of this population is not available. As shown, 12.2% of the overall civilian noninstitutionalized population has a disability. This means more than two (2) million NYS residents have a disability, with more than 40% of those individuals residing in New York City.

Long Island (9.6%) is the only labor market region in which the disability rate is below 10%. In contrast, there are seven (7) regions in which the disability rate exceeds 13%. The regions with the highest disability rates in NYS are the North Country (16.6%); Southern Tier (15.5%); Mohawk Valley (15.5%); Finger Lakes (14.5%); Western New York (14.5%); Central New York (14.0%); and the Capital Region (13.2%).

Share of Population in Poverty and Percent of Households Receiving Public Assistance, New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area	Population Below Poverty Level (%)	Population Under 18 years Below Poverty Level (%)	Households with Cash Public Assistance Income (%)	Households with SNAP Benefits in the Past 12 Months (%)
New York State	13.70%	18.16%	4.01%	15.03%
Capital	10.83%	13.80%	2.60%	10.09%
Central NY	13.89%	20.48%	3.42%	14.45%
Finger Lakes	12.32%	16.90%	3.46%	13.26%
Hudson Valley	10.97%	15.13%	2.53%	9.67%
Long Island	5.87%	6.46%	2.11%	5.66%
Mohawk Valley	14.15%	19.02%	2.87%	14.52%
New York City	17.36%	23.23%	5.57%	20.18%
North Country	14.56%	19.39%	3.83%	15.21%
Southern Tier	15.73%	19.25%	3.30%	13.42%
Western NY	14.41%	20.09%	3.19%	15.88%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP03 and S1701.

IV. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

Achieving economic security is a major challenge facing NYS's population as it seeks to attain the education, skills, and training needed to obtain employment. Data in the above table from the ACS shows poverty rates as well as the percentage of NYS households receiving Public Assistance (PA) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits within the past 12 months.

More than one (1) in eight (8) New Yorkers, or 13.7%, were living in poverty, per the ACS. This figure, however, was much higher (18.2%) for those under the age of 18.

These Statewide figures mask wide variation in poverty rates across the different labor market regions. For example, 5.9% of residents in the Long Island region lived in poverty, while 17.4% of New York City residents were in poverty.

The contrast in poverty rates is even greater for residents under the age of 18. For example, only 6.5% of Long Islanders under the age of 18 lived in poverty, while the comparable rate was over three (3) times higher (23.2%) in New York City.

Around 4% of households in NYS received PA. As with the various poverty measures discussed above, Long Island had the lowest rate (2.1%) of households receiving PA, while New York City had the highest rate (5.6%). Similarly, Long Island had the lowest percentage share (5.7%) of households receiving SNAP benefits in the past 12 months, while New York City topped the list (20.2%).

NYS continues to develop and administer workforce programs and education initiatives aimed at reducing the population in poverty and moving individuals into jobs with livable wages to decrease the need for public assistance.

Description of Apparent Skill Gaps

From 2022-2032, NYS's total employment is expected to increase by more than 1.1M among low-, middle- and high-skilled occupations. "Middle skill" occupations refer to those job titles that require education and/or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree. In NYS, average annual wages for middle-skill occupations range from $36,400 to $131,200, with an average of $57,100 per year across all middle-skill occupations. Many businesses in NYS struggle to fill these jobs.

Long-term occupational projections for NYS indicate there will be 12.6M job vacancies between 2022 and 2032. These vacancies are the result of new jobs (growth due to expansion or contraction) and separations (labor force exits and occupational transfers). Nearly 1.2M of these available vacancies will require some type of formal education or training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree.

Competing for these vacancies will be challenging for individuals facing barriers to employment. In NYS, civilian noninstitutionalized individuals aged 25 and over with disabilities are more than twice as likely to have less than a high school diploma (22.2% vs. 10.1%), and half as likely to have a bachelor's degree (22.2% vs. 43.0%) than civilian noninstitutionalized individuals aged 25 and over without disabilities. This gap in education and occupational skills only entrenches the fact that the employment rate of civilian noninstitutionalized individuals with disabilities in NYS age 16 and over is a staggering one-third (23.0%) of the rate of civilian noninstitutionalized individuals without disabilities (65.6%).

NYS stands ready to address these gaps and strengthen efforts towards meaningful employment and economic justice, particularly for people with disabilities. Through these efforts, educational opportunities and employment outcomes for New Yorkers will start to improve, and NYS businesses will become more competitive in the global economy due to the resulting increase in productivity. Career Centers and surrounding workforce systems must be made more inclusive of and accessible to any person facing multiple barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities and other special populations as defined under the WIOA. This will be done by strengthening the relationship and coordination between NYSDOL and its WIOA Title II and Title IV partners (described throughout this Plan) and leveraging the expertise of Disability Resource Coordinators hired under Governor Hochul's New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network.

These efforts will be further strengthened and bolstered by broader employment and training initiatives designed to create training pipelines, such as Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development grant programs, NYSDOL Workforce Development Training programs, and the NYSDOL Teacher Residency Program. Finally, trainees will be supported via enhanced virtual services accessible from anywhere in NYS, such as the Virtual Career Center, which offers virtual workshops, career fairs, and other career services to job seekers.

Since 2021 NYSDOL has partnered annually with The Business Council to gather feedback from businesses on their needs and on the state of the workforce. The results from the survey show that there are several non-technical skills that businesses identify as lacking among job applicants and new employees, including but not limited to, self-motivation, communication skills and problem solving/critical thinking. Businesses identified technical skills that are lacking, including but not limited to, basic computer use/computer literacy, software proficiency in Excel, and data analysis. Survey results are examined throughout this Plan. Strategies to better meet the hiring, education, and skills needs in these specific areas are more closely examined in Sections III.a.2.C and III.a.2.D of this Plan.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The unified or combined state plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the state, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(b)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(a)(iii) above.

Acronym List for Section II.a.2.	
ABAWD	Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATTAIN	Advanced Technology and Information Networking
CTE-Perkins V	Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act
CUNY	City University of New York
DCS	Director of Community Services
DOH	Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Services
DVOP	Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
DW	Dislocated Worker
ESD	Empire State Development
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development

FCCMS	Family-Centered Case Management Services
GED	General Educational Development (high school equivalency diploma)
IEP	Individual Employment Plan
ISY	In-School Youth
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
LMI	Labor Market Information
LVER	Local Veteran Employment Representative
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSC	National Skills Coalition
NY SCION	New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSDOL/OWD	New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
NYSOFA	New York State Office for the Aging
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Child and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OPWDD	Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PA	Public Assistance
Pre-ETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
PY	Program Year
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RAEN	Regional Adult Education Network
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
RFP	Request for Proposal
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program
SUNY	State University of New York
SYEP	Summer Youth Employment Program
System	New York State Workforce Development System
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
WCB	Workers' Compensation Board
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WSP	Wage Subsidy Program

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.

The New York State Workforce Development System (System) is being reimagined to better align workforce development activities with the needs of in-demand sectors and individuals most requiring services. There is a focus on building resilience in NYS's workforce through jobs that, at a minimum, pay a living wage for workers to support themselves in the modern economy, allow for career and salary growth, provide economic security, and remove the need for public assistance.[5]

NYS's strategic priorities aim to support all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills through training programs that are in line with the needs of businesses. Earnest efforts are being made to align workforce resources and data collection to hold System partners accountable to standardized success measures. This is imperative as NYS meets the moment, acknowledging the reality of reduced funding with the continuing need for sustainable workforce development programming. NYS will continue to attract and develop businesses in promising industries and strengthen the long-term pipeline of our workforce such that NYS remains a leader in the global economy and all workers remain competitive throughout their careers.

NYS Core Partners

Three (3) NYS agencies are responsible for the six (6) WIOA core programs:

1. NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) administers Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker (DW), and Youth programs and the Title III Wagner-Peyser program;
2. NYS Education Department (NYSED) Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) administers the Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy program through ACCES-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) and the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program through ACCES-VR (NYSED/ACCES-VR); and
3. Office of Child and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) administers the Title IV VR program for legally blind individuals.

Other Required WIOA Partners

In addition to the core program partners, there are several mandatory partner programs for which career services must be delivered under WIOA. These mandatory partner programs are:

- Trade Adjustment Assistance;
- Unemployment Compensation;
- Job Corps;
- YouthBuild;
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker;
- Indian and Native American programs;
- Jobs for Veterans;
- Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V);

[5] https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/OSWD-Job-Quality-2024.pdf

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- Senior Community Service Employment Program;
- Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training;
- Housing and Urban Development E&T; and
- Second Chance Act of 2007.

Other entities carrying out workforce development programs may also be designated as partners in the local area if approved by the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) and Chief Elected Official.

Interagency Team Partners

The NYS WIOA Interagency Team brings together agency expertise to explore myriad interconnected services delivered by WIOA core programs. Bi-annual meetings include staff from WIOA core programs as well as Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Department of Health (DOH), Empire State Development (ESD), Workers' Compensation Board, New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), NYSED/Perkins V, Department of State, State University of New York (SUNY), and City University of New York (CUNY). The broad goals of the Interagency Team are to:

- Review existing workforce programs for best practices and current performance barriers, and to ensure there is no duplication of services;
- Foster dialogue between workforce organizations to ensure program alignment with Labor Market Information and business needs; and
- Develop strategies to ensure workforce programs are aware of WIOA requirements and receive technical assistance when necessary.

Separate workgroups focus on specific issues as noted below. The workgroups meet outside of regular Interagency Team meetings, and with their small size and narrow focus, are encouraged to take ownership of their respective issues. Generally formed to research and resolve specific issues, the workgroups may be dissolved after completing the task they were designated to accomplish.

Registered Apprenticeship Workgroup

This workgroup is a collaboration between NYSDOL Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and WIOA core partners to:

- Increase knowledge of RA across agencies;
- Identify ways to best utilize agency partnerships to ensure RA opportunities are marketed to youth and disabled populations as a career opportunity; and
- Identify strategies to better promote RA.

This workgroup was formed in 2023 in response to the emphasis placed on RA federally and across NYS and includes members from several agencies.

Business Engagement Workgroup

The Business Engagement workgroup focuses on the development of a common system for agencies to track business engagement. This workgroup collaborates at local and State levels to ensure all

partners are included in the Regional Business Service Teams (RBSTs) and activities related to business engagement, such as learning from each other's business engagement techniques. NYSDOL provides access to its OSOS to support the core partners' tracking of business engagement activities. As a primary case management system, OSOS integrates the various workforce development services and business engagements activities entered by partners to manage data in a central platform to provide effective services delivery to both job seekers and businesses.

The workgroup is focused on strengthening communications with local teams with an emphasis on cross-agency collaboration, strengthening existing partnerships at the State and local levels and continuing to update Statewide contact lists for easy job seeker and business referrals. The group can hold workshops with local staff to present on what each agency does, how they engage with businesses, what services they provide and how they can work together to provide service delivery for businesses. The workgroup highlights successful collaboration and service delivery with peer-to-peer discussion on what works, and what others can focus on to get started and what barriers businesses are facing with their workforce.

Combined Plan Workgroup

This workgroup was tasked with making the 2024 four-year NYS Combined Plan more cohesive between the four (4) core WIOA titles and additional required WIOA partners included in the Plan. It focuses on streamlining the strategies outlined in the Plan and shifting the planning process from compliance to action. In 2024 an Action Plan was developed to align NYS's strategies with programs and initiatives. The Action Plan is an easily trackable document that includes responsible program partners and initiative status, helping inform the 2026 Modification.

Data Integration Workgroup

The Data Integration workgroup is tasked with determining how NYS can best comply with WIOA's requirement for integrated data reporting, focusing on developing a common Statewide unique identifier and determining a method for sharing and combining agency data. This group re-engaged in 2023 with members from several partner agencies to explore how a centralized database might be feasible in NYS's large and complex System. Building on previous goals of this group, some partner agencies have recently rolled out new case management systems with improved functionality. The group seeks to understand these new and existing systems and develop methods and/or procure software that will enable integrated data warehousing and reporting. Effective evaluation and data systems are imperative to ensure accountability for our workforce System to contribute to an inclusive economy. The group is revisiting its contacts with other states that have implemented similar systems to glean insights.

The high-level goals of this group include:

- Each agency to upgrade its data systems to include all reporting elements required by WIOA;
- Develop a method to share and combine agency data;
- Procure or develop a data warehouse to contain combined data; and
- Begin integrated reporting from a data warehouse.

In 2025, the core partners from the workgroup worked together to add an amendment to existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) so data for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers Primary Indicator of Performance could be reported as one (1) cohesive measure for the first time.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) Workgroup

This workgroup is tasked with developing the guidance and template for the local MOUs, required by WIOA for workforce systems partners in each LWDA to sign and execute. This workgroup previously developed and released TA #20-02.1.

Training and Accessibility Assistance Workgroup (TAAG)

TAAG is tasked with ensuring that Career Centers and services are available and accessible to all New Yorkers and that direct training and skill building occurring within the System is consistent across all partner programs. The group previously distributed adaptive technology to Career Centers throughout NYS, ensuring this goal is met. New and continuing goals of the workgroup are to:

- Compile and share an inventory of all trainings provided by NYS agencies;
- Understand continuing Career Center staff training needs pertaining to accommodations, accessibility, and assistive technology;
- Collaborate on ways to support business engagement efforts regarding recruiting, hiring, training, retaining, and advancing employees with disabilities;
- Ensure available Statewide training opportunities are promoted to all System participants; and
- Create a channel to distribute up-to-date information on accessibility compliance and best practices.

Moving forward, the workgroup will match System area needs to existing trainings and identify mechanisms for sharing or providing the training. If any gaps between needs and available training are identified, curricula will be developed, or other methods will be sought for meeting those needs.

Youth Collaborative Workgroup

The Youth Collaborative workgroup works collectively to support the development of youth and young adults by:

- Exploring, applying, or developing funding opportunities for youth programs and services specifically needed by youth, such as work readiness, work-based learning, dropout prevention, adult mentoring, alternative schooling, work experiences, and career pathways development;
- Increasing the knowledge and skills of staff across agencies to provide youth friendly services, incorporate youth voice and culture in programming, and help apply a youth lens;
- Engaging communities, families, and organizations to support positive development of youth with barriers to employment;
- Bringing focus to career pathway exploration and development for and with youth; and
- Creating the Pathways to Prosper: Career Exploration Initiative, a comprehensive program combining CareerZone assessments, Dollars & Sense exploration, and Virtual Reality experiences to guide career exploration.

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

As the lead agency on the NYS Combined Plan and the 2026 Modification, NYSDOL recognized that it was in a unique position to bring partners together to analyze the strengths and challenges of the State's diverse workforce development activities. In October 2025, the NYSDOL team used the Workforce Synergy Forum platform (described in section II.c.2.) to host a virtual Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis for this purpose.

The Director of Career Readiness and Workforce Partnerships at NYSED, the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Workforce Development at SUNY's Office of Workforce Development and Upward Mobility, and a LWDB director with over 20 years of experience facilitated the conversation. About 100 people participated, with engagement from every corner of the State and various staff levels, including LWDB Directors, Career Center Managers, front-line staff, and service providers.

A publicly available SOAR analysis model from the Society for Human Resources Management was used as the framework, and the conversation focused on four (4) umbrella topics:

1. Partnership development;
2. Work-based learning and business development;
3. Work-based learning and youth development; and
4. Staff development and sustainability.

Understanding that any SOAR analysis focuses first on planning then moves on to implementation, the conversation captured specific examples of what is working well around the State and a commitment by all to continue the work of building partnerships, breaking down silos, and sharing resources to maximize results for jobseekers and businesses. With education partners at the table, all agreed that the traditional college pathway is not the only way. Experiential learning, non-degree credentials, and lifelong learning must be prioritized and aligned with the needs of industry.

Partners are eager to share and learn about best practices. There is a need for tools that catalog Statewide programs and resources so more people can be informed about the variety of programs being implemented (some to be replicated and some to be improved upon). Better awareness of program inventory would also lead to less overlap, duplication, gaps and/or fragmentation of programs and services. Further, the exercise revealed that the culture of the System has not historically been geared towards aspirational or results-oriented thinking. The "results" (the "R" in SOAR) component of the analysis produced the least conversation and the least results. More opportunities for partners to come together for free-thinking and sharing are planned. Due to a variety of reasons, including staffing constraints, it can also be challenging to get all core WIOA partners at the table at the same time for strategic planning, even on virtual platforms.

It is stated in various ways throughout this Modification that NYS is a diverse state with no one-size-fits-all answer to workforce development; this statement cannot be emphasized enough. Workforce development funding is spread far and wide across State agencies and delivering the most relevant training and educational opportunities throughout the State's diverse geographic and economic landscapes comes with inherent challenges.

There are more than 95 Career Centers in 62 counties throughout NYS. These counties make up NYS's large and regionally complex economy – from New York City, one of the largest regional economies in the U.S., to expansive farmland that covers more than 40% of total land area in some counties**.** Thirty-one of the 62 counties in NYS are mostly or completely rural. Public transportation and childcare in these areas is often limited and broadband is still absent in some localities (three (3) widely known challenges not unique to NYS).

Partnership Development

NYS agencies have a strong history of collaborating to successfully implement WIOA strategies. Formal partnerships steer programs toward focused engagement and shared expertise with emphasis on data-driven outcomes, while day-to-day communication and familiar working relationships connect staff, programs, and agencies in informal ways that are vital to System operations.

Locally, Career Centers and Department of Social Services (DSS) offices have longstanding working relationships, coordinating workforce resources to maximize their funding streams, meet the specific needs of the locality, and improve outcomes for their shared customers. These relationships have strengthened due to collaboration between NYSDOL and OTDA since the implementation of WIOA.

Specific emphasis is placed on the coordination of youth services to allow youth served through DSS offices to also have access to specialized services delivered through WIOA. This partnership is intended to improve recruitment and the range and quality of services available to Out-of-School Youth (OSY).

Other examples of collaboration are listed below and described in-depth throughout this Modification:

- OCFS and NYSDOL Systems-change planning and LWDB program technical assistance improves transition outcomes for Runaway Homeless Youth, Foster Care, and youth that have been involved in any stage of the justice system;
- NYSDOL and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision match justice-involved job seekers with open jobs, provide free human resources services, and pre-screening of all applicants;
- Partner participation on Integrated Resource Teams creates more substantial employment outcomes for mutual customers; coordinates resources, funding, and expertise to solve challenges; reduces staff time needed to effectively implement service plans; and promotes systems change;
- Partners attend and present at various NYS agency and organization meetings, such as the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation (NY Alliance), the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, the New York Association for Continuing and Community Education, and the Council on Children and Families;
- Agreements between OPWDD and NYSED/ACCES-VR provide OPWDD-eligible individuals who are receiving certain pre-employment services the ability to participate in services without a need for formal determination of ineligibility for NYSED/ACCES-VR services, allowing for the maximum amount of choice by the individual as to which vocational and/or pre-vocational service best fits their needs;
- NYSED/ACCES-VR, in partnership with OMH, participates in the NYS Association for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services events, including its annual conference where NYSED/ACCES-VR staff directly engage people with behavioral health diagnosis to learn more about their service needs and ways to continue to support them;
- In many local areas, core program staff are working together and receiving cross training to improve skills associated with serving youth and adults with disabilities through the New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION) program;

- Career Centers near SUNY Educational Opportunity Centers have a standardized relationship including regular information sharing and meetings. In some cases, staff are out-stationed to provide services to job seekers and students;
- Career Centers are located on select SUNY campuses to ensure students have easy access to WIOA funding and career and training opportunities, and will soon provide users with access to SUNY microcredentials in dozens of priority industries, which will be listed on the NYSDOL VCC;
- NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy, and Research has increasingly been providing data to SUNY System Administration and campuses to aid in curriculum/program development, identifying good jobs for student advising and reviewing employment outcomes and salaries for graduates; and
- OCFS/NYSCB works closely with the NYS Talking Book and Braille Library to enroll participants in their audio books program to promote literacy within the legally blind population.

As NYS navigates changes to Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), partnerships with local DSS offices are more crucial than ever. For years, OTDA has been building partnerships across agencies and with local DSS. In each region of the State, OTDA hosts three (3) regional meetings throughout the year for DSS Employment Coordinators who oversee the work requirements for TANF and SNAP recipients. These meetings are an opportunity for districts to share best practices and discuss strategies for leveraging local resources and strengthening their employment, education, and training programs.

The Family-Centered Case Management Services (FCCMS) program provides specific funding for local Districts to hire additional staff and allocate resources to support the needs of families whose circumstances require a more intensive level of case management and specialized services to achieve financial stability and well-being. The target population includes households with complex needs such as mental health, developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, homelessness, and those experiencing domestic violence. As part of their FCCMS program plans, districts are required to collaborate with the county mental hygiene department's Director of Community Services (DCS) in planning the design of their case management services. The Program Plan must include documentation that services will be coordinated with Single Point of Access and Children's Single Point of Access and not duplicate these resources. Districts must also coordinate with any existing Children's System of Care infrastructure with the county DCS. The FCCMS initiative was renewed at the same level of funding in the 2025-26 State Budget.

OTDA also established a Statewide Community of Practice with the social services districts who take part in the FCCMS program, which the agency hosts every quarter via Microsoft Teams as a forum for workers who are involved in day-to-day family-centered case management to discuss best practices, interagency collaborations, common issues, and case trends. The Community of Practice meetings are an opportunity for districts to update OTDA and each other on the progress of their local initiatives and alert the agency to additional assistance these staff might need.

The passage of H.R. 1 expanded the population who is subject to the SNAP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) time limit and changed the criteria for which states can request waivers of the time limit. NYS's waiver for the ABAWD time limit on SNAP recipients terminates in early 2026. With this time limit coming back into effect for all areas of the State, ABAWDs' eligibility for SNAP is limited to three (3) months of benefits in a 36-month period unless the individual meets

specific work requirements or qualifies for an exemption. The ABAWD work requirements involve either participating in employment or other select activities for at least 80 hours per month or complying with a work experience or community service program for the number of hours per month equal to the household's SNAP benefit, divided by the higher of the federal or State minimum wage.

One way ABAWDs can meet the 80 hour-per-month work requirement is by participating in WIOA programs, including job search, job readiness, occupational skills or education. OTDA has encouraged districts to engage with their local WIOA providers to plan for the demand for more activity assignments created by the end of the ABAWD waiver, and it is likely that client referrals to these programs will continue to increase. OTDA and NYSDOL are already working together to provide services to ABAWDs via workshops, access to the VCC, and referrals to the Career Centers. It should be noted that the ABAWD work rules and time limit do not apply towards TANF eligibility.

Work-Based Learning and Business Development

There are tremendous opportunities in booming areas of the State, like in Central NY where Micron and other businesses are making historic investments and taking advantage of the Advanced Manufacturing Investment Credit (AMIC), and in the Capital Region where world-class infrastructure at NY Creates' Albany NanoTech Complex is supporting next generation semiconductor innovation and workforce development. In New York City, there are more than 360,000 people employed in technology and the city is home to over 25,000 tech startups. Today there are over 40,000 workers in the New York metro area with Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills.[6] The National Academy for AI Instruction, a partnership with Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and United Federation of Teachers announced in June 2025, will be based at a state-of-the-art bricks-and-mortar Manhattan facility designed to transform how AI is taught and integrated into classrooms across the U.S.[7]

Similarly, other regions that might seem limited by location are creating boundless opportunities for "new business development, job creation, and an enlivened local economy through collaborations."[8] The Institute for Rural Vitality (IRV) at SUNY Cobleskill is on a mission to engage the substantial resources of the College in collaboration with regional partners to enhance community and economic vitality in rural NYS. Within the IRV, the Center for Career and Workforce Development focuses on developing and offering customized training, continuing education programs, workshops, and credentials for participants to gain relevant skills that are needed in today's workforce. IRV actively collaborates with organizations to deliver industry-demanded education to build the regional economy and match the needs of both students and industry today and in the future.

Even with dynamic partnerships, there are challenges to delivering quality employment and training programs, including but not limited to:

- Lack of supports for transportation, food insecurity, childcare and emergencies that preclude participants from attending class;
- Financial inability for individuals to leave the workforce to pursue training which could provide a higher income/lack of flexible programming to accommodate full-time workers; and

[6] https://edc.nyc/sites/default/files/2025-03/NYCEDC-NYC-AI-2025-Report.pdf
[7] https://news.microsoft.com/source/2025/07/08/aft-to-launch-national-academy-for-ai-instruction-with-microsoft-openai-anthropic-and-united-federation-of-teachers/
[8] https://www.cobleskill.edu/institute/

- Lack of traditional State or federal financial aid for non-degree programs

Work-Based Learning and Youth Development

NYS takes a progressive approach to provide services to In-School Youth (ISY) and OSY as young as age 14, with OCFS/NYSCB serving those as young as age 10. Collaborations across NYS partners serving students and youth lead to stronger linkages with secondary and postsecondary education systems, increased business engagement, and additional employment opportunities for youth with barriers to employment.

The NYS VR programs, OCFS/NYSCB and NYSED/ACCES-VR, have established agreements with education officials, providing students with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) (as appropriate), transition services, and other VR services that may be required for youth in and out of school settings. Partnerships between the NYS VR programs and the special education system are therefore stronger and more seamless, and increased programs and services are available for ISY and OSY. OCFS/NYSCB is committed to serving transition age youth as young as 10, leading to a focus on increasing programs and services available for this age group Statewide.

Both NYS VR programs are critical for establishing a solid foundation for transition-age students with disabilities. All vendors are expected to establish partnerships with the local Career Centers, school districts, and businesses. The VR programs also work closely with System partners to develop work experience opportunities and facilitate the integration of youth with disabilities into local planning.

Work experience is an essential part of youth programs in NYS. The programs have developed innovative ways to help build work readiness skills, business relations, and worksite mentoring options via work experiences. Youth programs are engaged with RBSTs, many of which include partner staff, to further their skills and knowledge of developing work experience and employment opportunities with businesses for youth. Continual promotion of the NY Youth Jobs Program (a tax credit for hiring youth) and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program has facilitated business engagement.

Likewise, OTDA's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) introduces youth into the labor market, helping them acquire skills that can improve school performance and guide them to become responsible adults. All youth are paid at least the current NYS minimum wage and receive supportive and educational services including financial literacy training. Worksites are public, private, or nonprofit and include employment at parks, summer camps, childcare organizations, cultural centers, educational facilities, and community-based organizations.

OTDA allocates SYEP funds to all DSS locations and facilitates their coordination of these programs with the LWDBs. Currently, 32 districts have agreements wherein their allocation is designated to the LWDB to run their SYEP, while other districts operate the program themselves.

In 2024, OTDA established the Youth Employment Program (YEP) in conjunction with the SYEP to provide year-round employment opportunities for TANF-eligible youth with the intended goal of reducing community gun violence and youth criminal justice involvement. TANF funds appropriated for YEP support employment, education, and/or career exploration activities for youth ages 14-20 as part of a Statewide gun-violence reduction intervention model. OTDA allocates these funds to the 21 districts that receive NYS Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative funding. Currently, 15 districts have agreements wherein their allocation is designated to the LWDB to run their YEP, while

other districts operate the program themselves. From September 2024 to June 2025, more than 4,000 youth participated in the first full year of the YEP, working in school districts, libraries, restaurants, camps/childcare programs, and various community organizations. The 2025-2026 YEP will operate from September 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. To be eligible for the program, youth must be between the ages of 14-20 and have a household income below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Core programs, youth bureaus, alternative schools, and not-for-profit organizations collaborate to meet the needs of . In 2022, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP served 8,617 students between the ages of 16-24. By 2024, enrollment increased to 12,846 in the same age group, representing a 49% increase over two (2) years.

NYSDOL also continues to work with NYSED to integrate career awareness, development, and planning through NYSDOL's career delivery system, CareerZone, in classrooms to help make real world connections to enhance academic preparations. Lesson plans, facilitator's guides, and train the trainer sessions are utilized to assist educators with implementation of career development activities for ISY. NYSDOL developed a comprehensive training to facilitate career exploration for youth participants. The training guides them through a sequence of engaging activities, starting with CareerZone assessments to identify interests and strengths, followed by financial literacy, and culminating with an immersive Virtual Reality experience to explore various career pathways.

Staff Development and Sustainability

Some challenges are universally felt by all programs, like staffing shortages and frequent turnover. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP is overcoming significant leadership transitions in the Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) programs while enrollment for adult education services increases. The departure of RAEN directors in the West and Capital regions, while both were under contract with the same vendor, presented specific staffing challenges. Compounding this challenge, the RAEN request for proposal (RFP) released in the summer of 2024 was met with low interest in these same regions.

RAENs provide professional development and technical assistance to adult education programs within seven (7) designated regions, playing a crucial role in supporting quality adult education in NYS (II.a.2.C.). Data demonstrates that programs perform best with RAEN support. In the absence of RAENs in these two (2) regions, both the West and Capital regional managers (State staff) had taken the lead in securing professional development opportunities for their respective programs and increasing collaboration between RAENs and other regional managers to provide virtual professional development opportunities for all regions and in support of the West and Capital RAENs. Other regions have also extended their services and contributed significantly to the support of the West and Capital regions. The Accountability Office, ASISTS, and the regional managers collaborate on an ongoing basis to support all adult education programs in NYS. In Program Year (PY) 2024, RAENs provided 525 professional development trainings. In 2025 to continue to support the work in the Capital Region, AEPP has contracted with a vendor to provide RAEN and other professional development services Statewide. AEPP is currently finalizing the contract with another vendor for RAEN services in the West Region.

The SOAR analysis also revealed a need for better succession planning and institutional capacity to sustain collaborations. In certain LWDAs, program success hinges on personal relationships between one or two people, and when those people leave their positions, the foundations of the programs crumble.

Program partners continue to identify challenges related to serving individuals with disabilities that span all themes in the SOAR analysis:

- A lack of training opportunities for career development specifically designed for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- The need for greater business and public awareness that people with disabilities can and do participate in the workforce and meaningfully contribute to business' bottom lines; and
- Misaligned training and professional development for Career Center staff, including the need for training and technical assistance related to serving individuals with disabilities.

In recent years, legislation and initiatives have been put in place to break down silos between NYS agencies that provide services to people with disabilities and provide a disability perspective on policy proposals, legislation, and NYS agency operations (see section III.b.8.).

Federal Funding and Guidance

With significant cuts implemented and proposed at the federal level since 2020, it makes it impossible to meet the full potential of the WIOA statute. The National Skills Coalition (NSC) discussion brief titled, Creating an Equitable, Resilient Workforce System: New Ideas for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, reports, "…overall WIOA funding has declined in real terms since its passage in 2014." The NSC brief cites a 12% cut in Title I WIOA formula grants since 2014, and a full 50% program cut since its predecessor, WIA, was enacted in 2001.

The brief goes on to outline limited funding for adequate supportive services, like childcare and transportation, that are critical for many workers to participate in skills training. "While WIOA technically can be used to fund supportive services, it rarely does so because the system is so underfunded. Indeed, less than 15% of 2021 WIOA exiters received supportive services."

Due to these cuts, NYS is considering the merger or consolidation of a few LWDAs in 2026. At this time, LWDAs wishing to merge or consolidate have requested to do so organically due to funding and other factors specific to the local areas. This process is likely to continue into the last two (2) years of this Modification as analysis of these initial mergers and consolidations is conducted.

Federal policy guidance and requirements are typically delivered to each partner individually. This results in:

- Conflicting information;
- Continual and necessary front-line staff training;
- Essential cross-training for all System partners on cross-program knowledge and requirements;
- Reduction of staff availability to focus on collaborative efforts;
- The need for new processes, forms, and policies; and
- Significant modification to data collection systems.

Case Management and Data Integration

As noted above, limited funding affects the full execution of our System on all fronts. Funding is urgently needed for integrated evaluation and data systems. In an editorial commentary cited in the

previously mentioned NSC brief, experts in public policy, workforce, and the global economy from the Brookings Institution discussed the need for greater public investment targeting practices that "provide information that is critical to diagnose the needs of a rapidly changing labor market." This includes improvements to data and case management systems. In terms of case management, it is critical to monitor a worker's career pathway over time, through various programs and agencies. NYS does not currently have the capacity to track such data across agencies. Similarly, local skills training outcomes are not available.

As part of NYS's $530M investment in workforce development across seven (7) agencies (ESD, NYSDOL, DOH, OMH, OPWDD, SUNY, and CUNY), ESD's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD) is tasked with tracking and reporting outcomes of training programs under this funding appropriation. To achieve this, ESD/OSWD has partnered with NYSDOL to utilize OSOS for data reporting and has developed a custom form to capture participant outcomes, training completion and credential information, self-reported wage data pre- and post-placement, and wraparound services provided to individuals that attributed to their training success.

In the absence of being able to establish a Statewide case management and reporting system, the Data Integration Workgroup is working with partner agencies to identify what resources and supports would be necessary for a unified system. In the meantime, the group continues to work on developing a unique State identifier. The group has discussed using Social Security Number and encryption, though not every agency collects this information.

The Data Integration Workgroup has also identified several barriers that need to be addressed before further progress can be made, including:

- Changes in reporting requirements make it difficult to commit to a solution;
- Different agencies collect different identifying data;
- Some agencies have stricter data sharing policies;
- No targeted date has been provided for joint reporting outside of the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance measure; and
- No estimate has been provided for the funding required for such a project.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

NYS agency partners work together to provide seamless service delivery in the following ways:

Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker (DW), and Youth

NYS's Title I program served over 118,000 Adults; 145,000 DWs; and 7,700 Youth in PY 2024. The services to Adults and DWs are provided through an extensive network of Career Centers across NYS staffed by a variety of county and NYSDOL front-line staff, with services to youth provided through an extensive network of local providers.

NYS policy requires that all participants who are served in the Career Center System be provided with an Initial Assessment prior to or on the same day they receive their first staff-assisted service. The Initial Assessment is used to determine the participant's current circumstance, including but not limited to job status, work history, knowledge, skills, strengths, abilities, and barriers to

employment, etc. This information is then used to determine what services the individual may need, and the service delivery plan is developed to meet the needs of the individual.

Youth providers report to the LWDB on services and outcomes and ensure that all fourteen (14) Youth Elements are available to youth being served.

Title II – NYS Adult Education

NYS has one of the largest and most diverse adult education systems in the country. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP administers State and federal funds to support 304 adult literacy programs across NYS in any given PY. It served 73,013 students in PY 2024. This includes school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), CUNY and SUNY postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, unions, and three (3) library systems.

In 2020-2021, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP competitively bid over $50M in WIOA Title II funding to create new capacities and instructional approaches, beginning July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2027. The RFP resulted in multi-year awards to 200 projects to provide the following:

- Integrated Literacy and Civics Education and Integrated Education Training that combines contextualized academics with training leading to an industry-recognized credential to 33 funded projects;
- Corrections Education programs that develop career pathway connections with federal and State postsecondary resources to 21 funded projects;
- Single points of contact for workforce referrals in each funded program including required training and support of NYSDOL's Virtual Career Center for all adult learners;
- Workplace literacy skills integrated into all instruction;
- New Title II representatives for each of the 33 LWDBs who will provide information to, and receive input from, funded programs;
- Alignment of all funded programs with LWDB-approved plans for serving out-of-school youth and adults without a high school diploma or equivalent and those who do not speak English well;
- Integration of career exploration through ten (10) sector based NYSED/CUNY CareerKits into all instruction, along with the creation of math packets that align with the General Educational Development (GED) exam. Additional lessons have been constructed for beginning-level readers, a packet for life science and U.S. Constitution and government;
- Expanded case management, including the responsibility to enter students into the Virtual Career Center; and
- 67 Literacy Zones in high poverty communities, both urban and rural, with expanded responsibility for connecting with career pathways and resources from NYS Career Centers and workforce partners.

Since 2014, NYSED has developed state-of-the-art professional development. The seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers train Master Teachers in GED content areas and in English for Speakers of Other Languages literacy. Master Teachers have turn-keyed the training to 3,076 adult education teachers annually. NYSED-funded instructional resources are provided to teachers through www.CollectEDNY.org. In addition, NYS also supports the development and deployment of CareerKits focused on lessons built to support ten (10) broad areas of employment:

1. Health Care
2. Technology

3. Community & Social Services
4. Education
5. Manufacturing
6. Hospitality, Recreation, and the Arts
7. Food Production
8. Retail
9. Construction
10. Transportation & Warehousing

There is also a foundational, multi-sector CareerKit, called Career Fundamentals, that introduces students to key questions related to career decision-making.

Title III – Wagner-Peyser Act

NYS merit staff funded by the Wagner-Peyser Act and the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) grant are in Career Centers throughout NYS. Through functional alignment, NYS workforce professionals are trained to provide seamless services to unemployed customers, from providing meaningful assistance with customers interested in filing for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, to providing job search assistance, and career counseling.

RESEA staff provide referrals to WIOA partner programs to ensure individuals have access to the comprehensive services required. Staff use referral procedures, including warm hand-offs and documented follow-up, to facilitate seamless connections for participants across programs. These referral practices foster improved collaboration among WIOA partners and reduce barriers for customers navigating multiple services.

Staff capacity building is a NYS priority. NYSDOL provides high quality continuous development to workforce professionals to ensure excellent customer service to both job seekers and businesses. Professional development activities are provided weekly through System conference calls, monthly Statewide management information system webinars, UI training webinars, video conferencing, and train-the-trainer workshops. Professional development activities are conducted in several platforms, including Webex, Zoom and Teams for easy system access, and training events are recorded and viewable on a shared calendar.

Training includes such topics as customer service training, assisting UI customers in the Career Center, identifying and reporting UI issues, case management, identifying barriers to employment, eligibility requirements of WIOA partner agency services, disclosure of disability or justice system involvement, assessing customers for digital literacy, virtual services and technologies, and providing Labor Market Information (LMI) and labor exchange services within the System.

Title IV – NYS Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

NYS's VR programs employ VR counselors Statewide who are trained to work with individuals with disabilities to prepare them for employment. The VR programs only employ individuals who meet the NYS Department of Civil Service's personnel standard for VR counselors.

The VR program staff effectively provide services to all individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services. Each of the VR agencies in NYS have multiple District Offices and outstations for easy access to services by individuals with disabilities Statewide. Also, in some areas NYSED/ACCES-VR program staff are co-located at the local Career Centers. If VR program staff (NYSED/ACCES-VR or OCFS/NYSCB) are not located at a Career Center, information and services are seamlessly and promptly made available through processes that have been established by the local area.

Additionally, VR programs must provide Pre-ETS to eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities. For OCFS/NYSCB, students in this Pre-ETS category are known through the State-funded

children's program and have been made eligible in VR, when appropriate, by age 14. NYSED/ACCES-VR collaborates with secondary and postsecondary education programs as well as vendors to provide Pre-ETS for potentially eligible students. Potentially eligible students are not required to apply and be found eligible to receive those services.

OCFS/NYSCB and NYSED/ACCES-VR collaborate on a regular basis to provide guidance to educational agencies, VR personnel, and community rehabilitation providers responsible for facilitating Pre-ETS, transition services, supported employment services and to provide information about consultation, and technical assistance resources to assist schools and related community agencies in planning for transition of students who are legally blind and those who have other disabilities.

At the State level, both agencies have designated personnel that provide oversight and leadership for the development of policies, procedures, interagency training, and other State-level partnership activities for transition services. At the local level, VR counselors work closely with school district staff and local school districts have transition specialists who collaborate.

NYSED/ACCES-VR and OCFS/NYSCB have expanded supported employment services for individuals to 24 months. Both agencies provide extended supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities for up to four (4) years, or until the youth turns twenty-five (25) years old and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever comes first.

Additionally, individuals known to the VR programs looking to enter or already employed in subminimum wage will continue to receive information on the Career Center System services available to them to work towards obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment. ACCES-VR was awarded a federally funded model demonstration grant focused on Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) in five (5) counties across NYS. SWTCIE's purpose is to increase opportunities for those individuals contemplating or engaged in subminimum wage employment to consider and participate in programs and services leading to competitive integrated employment. As part of SWTCIE, ACCES-VR is implementing customized employment services to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, focusing on individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Social services districts in NYS offer employment and training services to recipients of Public Assistance (PA) to help them obtain and maintain employment and increase their financial stability. As TANF is an employment focused program, recipients who can work have to meet federal and State work requirements, and they are engaged in activities to improve their work readiness and to support job placement. NYS places strong emphasis on entries to employment using TANF funding as well as supporting individuals by increasing their earning potential though education and training opportunities. Each year, districts in NYS are allocated funds through the Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) to support a range of services to address the needs of low-income families consistent with local priorities, including employment services.

NYS is also committed to providing TANF resources to supplement local social services districts' investments in skills development programs. In addition to the FFFS allocations provided to social services districts, NYS has invested TANF funds in a variety of employment, education, and training initiatives, including:

- The Career Pathways IV Program, which provides funding to six (6) selected nonprofit contractors to link education and occupational training to subsequent employment through a continuum of educational instruction combined with integrated support services for

eligible individuals. The Career Pathways Programs are organized as a series of steps that lead participants toward job placement and increased earnings opportunities. Individuals eligible for the program include unemployed young adults aged 18 through 23 who meet the TANF 200% of federal poverty level certification requirements, individuals receiving PA, and/or 16- or 17-year-old heads of household who meet the TANF 200% of federal poverty level certification requirements. Targeted sectors include Health Care, Construction, Hospitality, and Business Services, as well as other locally identified employment sectors that have a demand for skilled workers and offer advancement.

- The Wage Subsidy Program (WSP), a longstanding program in which nonprofit contractors work to develop job opportunities for PA recipients and other low-income individuals using wage subsidies. The WSP targets those individuals who are unable to obtain employment through conventional job search techniques. Where PA recipients are served, coordination with districts for the identification and referral of participants is mandatory. OTDA contracts with three (3) nonprofit organizations in New York City for the 2022-2027 period.
- The Metropolitan College's Welfare to Careers Consortium Program, a unique collaboration among three (3) major higher educational institutions in New York City (Metropolitan College, Medgar Evers College, and Pace University). The program links educational opportunities to internships and job placements, offering TANF-eligible individuals with the case management and other support services needed to pursue career goals through higher education. This includes the opportunity to earn a two-year degree or a baccalaureate degree, greatly increasing the chances of gaining permanent, full-time employment at a sustainable salary level.
- The Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) program is a partnership between SUNY and OTDA, serving some of NYS's most economically challenged communities. ATTAIN utilizes state-of-the-art technology to improve the user's academic and employability skills in an increasingly demanding technological world. There are currently 31 ATTAIN labs in locations established to reach individuals in receipt of PA or within the 200% of federal poverty designation. The ATTAIN program works with WIOA partners, including NYSDOL and NYSED, to provide TANF-eligible individuals, PA recipients, DWs, individuals receiving unemployment benefits, OSY, and SYEP participants with Microsoft Office training and other associated certifications. OTDA has an MOU with the SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development to support the program's TANF-eligible participants with TANF funding.

TITLE V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for older workers authorized in Title V of the Older Americans Act and is administered by U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration. SCSEP is the only federally sponsored employment and training program targeted specifically to low-income older individuals who can enter or reenter the workforce. The dual goals of the program are to promote useful opportunities in community service job training and to move SCSEP participants into unsubsidized employment.

SCSEP provides subsidized, part-time, community service training for unemployed, low-income persons aged fifty-five (55) or older who have poor employment prospects. Through this program, older workers have access to SCSEP services and employment training assistance through the Career Center System. Program participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest of the federal, state, or local minimum wage.

Beginning July 1, 2018, NYSOFA transitioned from providing SCSEP services through twenty-nine (29) area agencies on aging (County AAAs), who either directly provided or contracted out the program, to regional providers operating eight (8) regions in NYS. The regional providers all directly provide SCSEP services and began operation as NYSOFA's subgrantees on July 1, 2018.

SCSEP participants are placed in a wide variety of community service assignments at nonprofit and public entities, allowing these agencies to enhance and provide needed services and older workers to gain job skills. These community service training assignments promote self-sufficiency, help organizations that benefit from increased civic engagement, and support communities. These assignments are intended to serve as a bridge to unsubsidized employment. In turn, regional economies and businesses benefit from an expanded pool of experienced, dependable labor in the local workforce.

SCSEP participants also receive a variety of services including a comprehensive assessment, Individual Employment Plan (IEP) development, orientation, community service placement, training specific to an individual's community service assignment, and other training as necessary. Supportive services, annual physicals, assistance in securing unsubsidized employment, and access to services at local Career Centers are also provided to participants.

Recognizing that an increasing number of jobs going forward will require the ability to work remotely, NYS applied for and received Additional Funds for Participant Training and Supportive Services for PYs 2021-2024 and continuing in PY 2025. These funds are being used to purchase computers to be loaned to participants who do not have access to a computer or smart phone and provide funding assistance for access to internet services in addition to more specialized training targeted to the local employment market demand.

A challenge to all SCSEP programs' capacity has been the uncertainty caused by the delay or possible elimination of the national grantee funding for PY 2025. State and national grantees work in concert, in fact, national grantees are sub-grantees in six (6) of NYS eight (8) SCSEP regions. If there is no national grantee funding, those national grantees may no longer be viable, thus impacting both State and national projects.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

The Federal Trade Act provides special benefits under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Workers program to those who were laid off or had hours reduced due to their position offshoring, or because their employer was adversely affected by increased imports from other countries. These benefits include paid training for a new job, financial help in making a job search in other areas, or relocation to an area where available jobs are more plentiful. Those who qualify may also be entitled to weekly Trade Readjustment Allowances after their unemployment compensation is exhausted. Reemployment TAA, which provides wage supplements for re-employed older workers whose re-employment resulted in lower wages than those earned in their trade-affected employment, may also be available.

The primary goal of the TAA program is to assist trade-affected workers in upgrading their skills, then locating suitable re-employment as rapidly and effectively as possible through:

- Timely provision of Rapid Response services;
- Access to individualized assessments;
- Effective case management; and

- Focusing on re-training workers determined to need further skills to obtain employment in emerging and in-demand occupations.

NYS has determined that individuals eligible for services under the TAA programs are best served through the Career Centers. Specifically, co-enrollment (which is a TAA regulatory requirement) in the WIOA DW and Wagner-Peyser programs, allows trade-affected customers to take advantage of re-employment, assessment, LMI, career advisement, case management, and follow-up services through those programs, in addition to TAA-specific services. WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded staff and services are functionally aligned within each of NYS's local Career Centers. This allows services to be provided to Trade customers in a seamless and efficient manner. Trade-funded services can be layered on top of WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded services already provided through the Career Center.

All TAA staff have been advised that co-enrollment is a regulatory requirement under the TAA Program. This information was provided in TA #21-03, issued on April 27, 2021, which states "…all Trade Act participants are co-enrolled in WIOA Dislocated Worker Program, consistent with 2020 Trade Act regulatory requirements."

Presently the TAA program nationally is operating under termination provisions set forth in the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015. NYS serves a reduced caseload of eligible individuals. These are customers who retain program eligibility from before the termination phase began.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)

The JVSG program provides special assistance to veterans and eligible persons. JVSG staff are assigned to the Career Centers throughout NYS. At the point of entry, Career Center staff determine eligibility for JVSG services by completing the Veteran Services Eligibility Form with every customer who identifies as a veteran or eligible person, regardless of the service delivery program under which they are served to determine if the customer is eligible for Priority of Service, Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) services, and for referral to receive Individualized Career Services from a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

DVOP specialists only serve eligible veterans and eligible persons with employment barriers, transitioning service members, or other populations as defined by the Secretary of Labor. Veterans who are not eligible to meet with a DVOP are served on a priority basis by other Career Center staff.

The DVOP specialist service delivery model provides early intervention, services tailored to individual veteran needs, and expedited referral of veterans who need additional assistance to services available within the System. Awareness and collaboration between programs are essential and training is provided to keep staff up to date. For example, DVOPs refer veterans with disabilities to Disability Resource Coordinators under the NY SCION program, who are certified Benefits Advisors and have specialized training, awareness, and capacity to work with people with disabilities.

Through a continuous engagement of one-on-one appointments and between appointment contacts, veteran customers receive a comprehensive assessment, an IEP, and customized job search support by a DVOP specialist. Veteran customers are provided with resume assistance, career guidance, coaching, job leads, and referrals to ensure suitable job placement.

LVER staff serve all veterans and eligible persons in the Career Centers. The LVER staff's primary functions are to advocate for the hiring of veterans and eligible persons with businesses, as well as conduct job matching, job placement, and business outreach on behalf of the individuals in their caseload.

b. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

1. VISION

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

The New York State (NYS) Workforce Development System (System) aims to ensure every business has access to a skilled labor force and that every New Yorker has access to job training opportunities that lead to high quality employment or career advancement.

To advance this Vision, NYS will adhere to the following guiding principles:

- The System has a dual stakeholder focus on both businesses and job seekers;
- Services and programs within the System will continually evolve to become more nimble, flexible, coordinated, and easily accessible to all stakeholders;
- Equal access and opportunity are available for all, especially those individuals who face barriers to employment;
- Workforce programs and investment decisions will be result- and business-driven to ensure success and evaluated based on performance outcomes;
- Strategies will be regionally-focused and business-driven to ensure enhanced economic outcomes for job seekers and communities; and
- The NYS workforce and education systems are aligned around outcome-driven programs and models.

2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

PRIORITY 1: Ensure training programs in New York State stay in line with the needs of businesses.

- Make business and industry engagement a central focus of the State Workforce Investment Board;
- Prioritize the development and integration of professional ("soft") skills;
- Utilize the Regional Economic Development Councils to enhance business partnerships with local workforce partners, including Local Workforce Development Boards, higher education, P-12 education systems, and nonprofit training providers;

- Expand engagement opportunities for industry on talent needs and opportunities;
- Produce and implement a new resource mapping tool to help businesses, training and education providers, and individuals navigate workforce resources;
- Continue to explore and validate responsive work-based training models, such as the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3);
- Promote and incentivize the use of work-based learning models, such as On-the-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship (RA), and work-based internship strategies to expand effective experiential learning opportunities;
- Grow RAs, and ensure youth can access the RA training model;
- Expand access and availability of microcredentials and encourage business validation. This will include identifying successful information campaigns for priority skills that already exist and replicating best practices across NYS;
- Expand short-term training options at NYS Career Centers;
- Expand digital literacy initiatives;
- Launch an information campaign about priority skills;
- Promote best practices for infusing priority skills into training programs and funding for skills training; and
- Identify and eliminate additional barriers to System engagement for businesses, particularly small businesses.

PRIORITY 2: Support all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills, accessing support services, and connecting to jobs.

- Support expanded flexibility and funding for access to technology, transportation, affordable childcare, stable housing, mental health services, etc.;
- Expand system alignment and support for youth, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, veterans, older workers, and others with barriers to employment;
- Expand understanding about the multi-generational workplace and effective interventions;
- Educate businesses about the available supports for and benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and support businesses that hire individuals with disabilities;
- Identify related best practices and collaborative service delivery models that are already doing this well;
- Expand understanding about the various ways individuals learn and work in the workplace and effective interventions; and
- Improve collaboration with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) programs within the System and explore the ability of the System to expand program support beyond mandated TANF and SNAP E&T career services.

PRIORITY 3: Attract, support, and develop businesses in promising and priority industries.

- Align and support training opportunities for emerging industries such as clean energy, advanced manufacturing, etc.;

- Expand State-level funding for Empire State Development's Office of Workforce Development;
- Investigate additional ways to effectively and efficiently ensure funding is meeting the local and State workforce needs, and is being utilized;
- Expand the work of the Office of Just Energy Transition;
- Align efforts to support infrastructure construction and maintenance; and
- Ensure business leaders understand what constitutes quality jobs and the nexus between job quality and performance.[9]

PRIORITY 4: Align workforce resources and data collection and hold System partners accountable to standardized success measures.

- Create, publicize, and annually update a NYS workforce strategy;
- Develop common success metrics;
- Implement tracking and common reporting requirements for funded programs;
- Work to streamline data collection and interagency data sharing;
- Expand the interagency team and ensure State agency workforce programs are aligned and not duplicative;
- Review existing workforce programs for best practices and current performance barriers;
- Align regional workforce development stakeholders;
- Align performance and financial reporting systems locally and Statewide to better allocate funding, improve accountability, and address systemic issues;
- Ensure all elements of the System have built-in feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and roundtables; and
- Monitor progress in, and partner with, other states to share resources in creating the most impactful programs.

PRIORITY 5: Support existing workers to ensure they remain competitive throughout their career.

- Continue annual business and job seeker surveys and data information sharing;
- Fund training opportunities for professional skills development;
- Ensure funding to support the trainings and outreach to businesses is flexible;
- Create more self-service virtual tools for job seekers;
- Design supportive materials to help the public navigate workforce development and funding opportunities;
- Produce and implement a new resource mapping tool to help businesses, training and education providers, and individuals navigate workforce resources; and
- Ensure workers have access to the benefits, fulfillment, safety and security of quality jobs.

PRIORITY 6: Strengthen the long-term pipeline of workers to support the future of work.

[9] https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/Job-Quality-Toolkit.pdf

- Expand partnership between P-12 and higher education. Explore additional P-20 programmatic models;
- Ensure education standards and graduation requirements include professional skill development;
- Expand career exploration models including classroom experiences, virtual reality, Commercial Driver's License simulators, etc.;
- Expand use of the teacher residency model, teacher RAs, and other incentives for growing the number of teachers in NYS;
- Assess strategies for attracting out-of-state talent and investigate potentially simplifying the reciprocity process for professionals, especially teachers, certified in other states and countries;
- Make the teacher ambassador program permanent; and
- Encourage career counseling partnerships with education.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

WIOA performance reporting seeks to improve accountability across all core programs by requiring reporting on a set of uniform measures. The core programs are required to regularly report to the federal government and to the public on program performance, to ensure the System is accountable and transparent in the pursuit of NYS's workforce vision and goals.

The core programs updated their case management systems to collect the data elements required by WIOA in Program Year 2017 and have since updated data entry policy to include requirements. This data collection has facilitated the ability to consistently set accurate performance goals and inform performance negotiations. WIOA Title II and IV program staff continues to gather the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures. Additionally, the core programs have established data sharing agreements for the programs that do not have access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data. Both Title II and Title IV have UI wage data Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in place and have access to State Wage Interchange System data. Baseline performance has now been established based on data collected over the past few years.

Performance Goals

	Title I – Adult Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.5%		66.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,950		$8,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	58.0%		58.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0%		61.5%	
	Title I – Dislocated Worker Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	64.5%		65.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.5%		66.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,750		$7,850	
Credential Attainment Rate	56.0%		56.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	55.0%		55.5%	
	Title I – Youth Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$3,700		$3,800	
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0%		57.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	52.0%		52.5%	
	Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	68.0%		68.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	69.0%		69.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,800		$7,900	
Credential Attainment Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation Program – NYSED/ACCES-VR			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$6,000		$6,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	N/A		N/A	

	Title IV- Vocational Rehabilitation Program – OCFS/NYSCB			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$6,000		$6,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	N/A		N/A	

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The federal government uses the primary indicators of performance as the main assessment of the effectiveness of the NYS workforce development system. NYS continues to deliver webinars and provide technical assistance to local areas to increase performance and ensure goals are met. In addition, NYS continues to improve intermediary performance indicators designed to support the primary indicators and System goals. These intermediary indicators improve communication between System partners and influence the behavior of frontline staff in NYS Career Centers to improve services to participants as needed. NYS has had success with intermediary indicators in the past and will continue to develop tools to support and improve services provided by the NYS System. NYS will continue to conduct analysis and develop intermediary reports based on the primary indicators of performance.

Performance targets for Title II are annually approved by Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). New York State Education Department/Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) refines technical assistance each year to help programs improve measurable skill gain targets. Case management services prioritize addressing barriers to employment by updating assessment policies and identifying barriers for students with significant challenges. When barriers are identified, case managers co-enroll students in supportive services within WIOA and other local partners.

NYSED/ACCES-AEPP will continue to comply with WIOA requirements. This includes surveying all students in the 2nd and 4th quarters after their exit quarter. The NYSED/ACCES-AEPP electronic data management system continues to be hard-wired to exit students after 90 consecutive days of no activity. In addition to manual surveying done at the local program level, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP continues to work with NYSDOL to conduct a data exchange with the UI database and the NYSED reporting system to identify employment and wage outcomes. Seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network centers and the National Reporting System (NRS) Accountability Office, both funded with WIOA leadership funds, are prepared to annually mount professional development and technical assistance for agencies that are WIOA-funded, beginning July 1, 2022. The NRS Accountability Office ensures adult education programs met federal and State benchmarks by analyzing data, strategizing support, increasing technical assistance, and guiding programs towards success.

The federal office sets the reporting deadline for NRS State data to August 15th annually. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP has taken steps to comply with all required deadlines. All training and performance reporting policies will be closely coordinated with partner programs to ensure a smooth transition into the contract period that began July 1, 2022, and ends June 30, 2027.

c. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

Acronym List for II.c.	
COMPAS	Correction Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions
CUNY	City University of New York

DEI	Disability Employment Initiative
DOCCS	New York State Division of Corrections and Community Supervision
ERAT	Employee Retention and Advancement Training
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development
FFFS	Flexible Fund for Family Services
HVCC	Hudson Valley Community College
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IES	Integrated Employment Specialist
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NY ETM	New York Employment Transition Model Demonstration Grant
NY SCION	New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network
NYATEP	New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSDOL/OWD	New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
NYSERDA	New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OMH/NYESS	Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
SUNY	State University of New York
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WFS	Work for Success
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23).

New York State (NYS) supports career pathways that are nimble and responsive to the changing needs of both the current and future workforce. These progressive pathways go beyond traditional, linear education models and adapt to shifting workforce needs on a regional basis. This includes the need for continuous upskilling and reskilling throughout each worker's career. Investing in and removing regulatory barriers for these models ensures that all New Yorkers, regardless of their age or educational background, have access to fully integrated customer service that helps them attain sustainable wage employment and progress throughout their careers.

As discussed throughout this Plan, Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a substantial resource for career pathways in NYS. Through the RA program, apprentices receive both On-the-Job Training (OJT) as well as Related Instruction (RI) in a classroom setting while earning a progressively increasing wage as they work and gain skills throughout the programs, which take from one (1) to six

(6) years to complete, depending on the trade. RAs are an entry point to well-paying jobs and a viable career.

For short-term upskilling and reskilling in a highly accessible platform, Coursera offers curated collections of courses and other learning activities to quickly equip learners with the skills needed to fill entry level roles in in-demand occupations, such as Health Care Specialist, Digital Marketing Associate, Data Analyst, and Information Technology Support Specialist. These courses have been developed in partnership with New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and Coursera's content team to meet the demands of NYS's dynamic labor market.

Career pathways in in-demand industries have historically been promoted through NYSDOL's Workforce Development Training Employee Retention and Advancement Training (ERAT) Program, designed to provide occupational skills training to existing employees in low and middle-skills occupations leading to job advancement and retention. As an example, in the Health Care industry, a hospital will apply for ERAT funding to upgrade the skills of its existing Certified Nursing Assistants, which will enable them to move into Licensed Practical Nursing positions.

NYS is also committed to providing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) resources to supplement local social services districts' investments in skills development programs. In addition to the Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) allocations provided to social services districts, NYS has invested TANF funds in a variety of employment, education, and training initiatives. This includes the Career Pathways IV Program, which provides funding to six (6) selected nonprofit contractors to link education and occupational training to subsequent employment through a continuum of educational and training instruction combined with integrated support services for eligible individuals aged 16 and over. The Career Pathways Programs are organized as a series of steps that lead participants toward job placement and increased earnings opportunities. Individuals eligible for the program include unemployed young adults 18-23 who meet the TANF 200% of federal poverty level certification requirements, individuals receiving public assistance, and/or 16- or 17-year-old heads of household who meet the TANF 200% of federal poverty level certification requirements. Targeted sectors include Health Care, Construction, Manufacturing, Hospitality, and Business Services, as well as other locally identified employment sectors that have a demand for skilled workers and offer advancement.

Title II Adult Education uses Labor Market Information to help programs construct high demand industry sector programming. Programs also collaborate with their Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) to share industry needs and employment opportunities. WIOA Title II funds support Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services, Adult Secondary Education, and/or English Language Acquisition (ELA) programs and Integrated Education and Training (IET). A minimum funding amount of $100,000 has been allocated to LWDBs based on the area's percentage of the State's adult population who are under-educated and lack a high school diploma or equivalency, the area's percentage of the State's adult population who speak English "less than very well", and populations reported as in poverty according to the U.S. Census' 2010 American Community Survey.

NYSED/ACCES-VR has a Business Relations team that includes a Statewide Coordinator and placement and marketing representatives, known as Integrated Employment Specialists (IESs), in the 15 District Offices and in three (3) Satellite Offices. In addition, there is an IES two (2) for each of the five (5) regions of NYS. The IES team works with businesses to create job opportunities and career pathways for NYSED/ACCES-VR customers.

Additionally, in many local areas, core program staff work together and receive cross training to improve skills associated with serving youth with disabilities. From 2009 to 2020, NYSDOL administered four (4) rounds of Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) pilot projects targeting both adults and youth with disabilities. These competitive grants placed Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in Career Centers around NYS. DRCs are specialized staff responsible for increasing the capacity within Career Centers to better serve people with disabilities. The intervention strategies and best practices learned through the DEI are now being implemented across NYS through the New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION), with DRCs working to assist individuals with disabilities in 27 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs).

NYS System partners are encouraged to coordinate with other education and workforce development initiatives, including career pathways and sector partnerships developed under WIOA and other federal laws and initiatives. This is also true for Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) and Perkins V grantees, and other programs that provide students with transition-related services, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2).

NYS's strategic priorities aim to align programs and resources to achieve fully integrated customer service that supports all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills through training programs that are in line with the needs of businesses.

The most successful workforce development initiatives intersect several priorities, connecting the dots between agencies, institutions, policies, and people to deliver forward-thinking programs that move the needle. The narrative below expounds on some of the State's priority programs. To avoid redundancy, links to webpages and/or other sections of the Plan are included where programs are more thoroughly described.

Priority #1 – Ensure training programs in NYS stay in line with the needs of businesses.

- Strategy – Produce and implement a new resource mapping tool to help businesses, training and education providers, and individuals navigate workforce resources.
    - The State Workforce Investment Board Career and Industry Committee is working with NYSDOL staff and other State agencies to enhance the existing Business Express tool.
- Strategy – Promote and incentivize the use of work-based learning models, such as OJT, RA, and work-based internship strategies to expand effective experiential learning opportunities.
    - Internships and Experiential Learning at the State University of New York (SUNY) (III.a.2.E.).
    - Work-based training models (VI.b.1.).
    - RA (VI.b.2.).
- Strategy – Grow RAs and ensure youth can access the apprenticeship training model.

- NYS RA Business Navigator Program (VI.b.2.).
- SUNY Apprenticeship Business Developers focus on supporting the growth of apprenticeship programs across sectors particularly in business, technology, education, healthcare, agriculture and advanced manufacturing. Their roles blend business development with apprenticeship program promotion, ensuring all key stakeholders from NYSDOL to SUNY institutions are at the table with the goal to develop an apprenticeship program that breeds a successful pipeline for tomorrow's workforce.

- Strategy – Expand digital literacy initiative.
  - Northstar Digital Literacy (III.a.2.C.).
  - Empire State Development ConnectALL Initiative's mission is to build NYS's digital infrastructure and connect all New Yorkers through the internet. The ConnectALL Office oversees the Statewide digital equity plan and administers over $1B in public investments across NYS.

Priority #2 – Support all job seekers, especially those with barriers to employment, in obtaining relevant skills, accessing support services, and connecting to jobs.

- Strategy – Expand system alignment and support for youth, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, veterans, older workers, and others with barriers to employment.
  - NY SCION and New York Employment Transition Model Demonstration Grant (NY ETM) "DreamLink NY" (III.b.8.).
  - The Uniquely Abled Academy at Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) is a first-of-its-kind program designed to train, support, and provide job placement services to create inclusive career opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum. HVCC is the first college in NYS to offer a Uniquely Abled Academy, with current programming to prepare students for jobs as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) operators in advanced manufacturing fields.
  - Jobs for Veterans State Grant (II.a.2.C.).
  - Jails to Jobs, Work for Success and re-entry (see full description under the Programs and Initiatives heading below in this section).
  - Literacy Zones (see full description under the Programs and Initiatives heading below in this section).
  - Family-Centered Case Management Services allocates additional staffing resources to social services districts for them to provide a more intensive level of case management to help stabilize households with complex needs such as homelessness, physical and mental health barriers, substance use disorders, and/or those experiencing domestic violence (II.a.2.B.).
- Strategy – Expand understanding about the multi-generational workplace and effective interventions.
  - Master Plan for Aging (III.a.2.B.).
  - NYSDOL's new Older Worker Resource page aligned with National Employ Older Workers Week.

Priority #3 – Attract, support, and develop businesses in promising and priority industries.

- Strategy – Align and support training opportunities for emerging industries such as clean energy and advanced manufacturing.
    - Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD) funding opportunities (III.a.2.G.).
    - One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP).
    - Empire AI.
    - SUNY Reconnect and City University of New York (CUNY) Reconnect offer free community college for adult learners aged 25-55 who do not already have a degree and want to pursue an associate degree in select high-demand fields.
- Strategy – Align efforts to support infrastructure construction and maintenance.
    - NYSDOL created an Infrastructure office to support involved parties.

Priority #4 – Align workforce resources and data collection and hold system partners accountable to standardized success measures.

- Strategy – Implement tracking and common reporting requirements for funded programs.
    - The workforce development Catalog of Funding (COF) describes the various State and federally funded programs and/or tax credits available for workforce development and preparation, adult education, and skills training.
    - WIOA Program Performance dashboard.
    - ESD/OSWD established uniform metrics for all grants and a common database to measure impact across programs.

Priority #5 – Support existing workers to ensure they remain competitive throughout their career.

- Strategy – Continue annual business and job seeker surveys and data information sharing.
    - 2024 Business and Jobseeker Survey results.
- Strategy – Ensure workers have access to the benefits, fulfillment, safety, and security of quality jobs.
    - ESD/OSWD Defining Job Quality resource.

Priority #6 – Strengthen the long-term pipeline of workers to support the future of work.

- Strategy – Ensure education standards and graduation requirements include professional skill development.
- Strategy – Expand use of the teacher residency model, teacher apprenticeships, and other incentives for growing the number of teachers in NYS.
    - The NYSDOL Teacher Residency Program (TRP) and the NYSED CTE Teacher Certification for Career Changers (III.a.2.C.).

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Business Engagement

NYSDOL Business Engagement collaborates with ESD, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), NYSED, and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to provide information and services to businesses already located in NYS and those considering

developing new sites here. Partnering with local, regional, and State economic development and workforce development entities allows the System to provide labor market and talent pool information, as well as available hiring and training incentives to the business community.

The mission of NYS's business engagement activities is to provide business customers with a competitive advantage in the labor market. This is executed through a holistic business-centric understanding of the customer, centered around how NYS can help the business versus how the business can help us. Aligning with partners throughout NYS provides a more efficient way to educate businesses on the variety of resources available.

Agencies involved in business engagement have also developed partnerships with higher education on multiple levels; utilizing colleges, universities, and training providers as strategic partners for regional growth, as referral sources for qualified jobseekers, and as business customers when they need to fill job openings.

NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to implement strategies with the other WIOA core partners for a collaborative approach to heighten the focus on business needs and to strengthen and streamline System efforts (additional detail can be found in the Workforce Development Activities section of this Plan). NYSED/ACCES-VR developed partnerships to support these efforts including a Statewide disability employment training initiative with Cornell University, local job placements, and marketing initiatives with the Society for Human Resource Management and the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) unions across the State. In addition, NYSED/ACCES-VR is a member of New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP), which serves a cross-section of the major titles of WIOA, including LWDBs, Career Centers, partner programs, and organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to work closely with NYATEP under WIOA implementation to increase communication and common understanding of the law across the four (4) titles. This work helps to support partners' understanding of VR services and inclusion of it within their local System.

Supporting all Job Seekers

From 2009 to 2020, NYSDOL administered four (4) rounds of Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) pilot projects targeting both adults and youth with disabilities. The intervention strategies and best practices learned through the DEI are now being implemented across NYS through the NY SCION Program. DRCs hired under NY SCION model collaborative interventions such as Integrated Resource Teams to leverage existing Career Pathways partnerships to blend and braid funds and improve mutual outcomes. Further, the NYS Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System (OMH/NYESS) identified a need for training and technical assistance related to serving individuals with mental health needs at Career Centers. OMH/NYESS began delivering related training and technical assistance beginning in Q1 of 2024, with ongoing assistance and training available as needed.

Adult Education continuously works to provide co-enrollment services, specifically through case management activities to other WIOA partners. Case Managers are responsible for:

- Assessing the participant's needs and goals and developing a plan to address them;
- Identifying the participant's barriers to education and employment;
- Assisting participants in completing the Individual Student Record Form;

- Acquainting the participant with the resources and opportunities offered by other organizations, especially those that the participant needs most;
- Educating the participant while identifying and meeting them at their literacy level;
- Referring the participant to appropriate community resources; a list unique to each program;
- Recording details of all time spent with the participant; and
- Building trust and rapport with the participant and empowering them to reach their goals.

NYS is also committed to providing TANF resources to supplement local social services districts' investments in skills development programs. In addition to the FFFS allocations provided to social services districts, NYS has invested TANF funds in a variety of employment, education, and training initiatives.

System partners are encouraged to coordinate with other education and workforce development initiatives, including career pathways and sector partnerships developed under WIOA and other federal laws and initiatives. This is also true for OCFS/NYSCB and Perkins V grantees, and other programs that provide students with transition-related services, including the IDEA.

Empowering Staff through Training and Development

In August 2023, NYSDOL staff offered a two-part interactive learning series for Career Center staff, LWDBs, and NYSDOL Career Center Managers titled "WIOA Training Services Strategy Development". The intention of the series was twofold:

1. To encourage partners to strategically think about training services, not just as a check box on a form, but as an extraordinary opportunity to deploy WIOA funds in ways that benefit and uplift members of our communities – those for whom the funds are intended, which has long-term implications for the health of businesses and families; and
2. In doing so, ensuring training programs in NYS stay in line with the needs of businesses.

The series offered flexible agendas to empower staff to explore what is important to them rather than what is dictated to them by NYSDOL administration. Relevant clips from the Workforce GPS webinar, "Overview of Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 21-22" were used to provoke thoughtfulness about why it is important to spend training dollars on high growth, high quality occupations and generate overall participation.

The two (2) pilots helped NYSDOL WIOA Administration staff develop the Workforce Synergy Forum, a monthly staff development program. This Synergy Forum is a platform for local Career Center staff, LWDB Directors, Deputy Directors, and NYSDOL Career Center Managers to collectively review and discuss national, tate, and local guidance with peers and explore strengths, opportunities, achievements, and results in enhancing workforce services and strategies. The intention is to spark curiosity and encourage local staff to be partners in strategic thinking, reframing how workforce leaders look at their jobs and contributions to the community and workforce.

About 80-100 workforce professionals participate monthly in the Synergy Forum, and many listen to the recording and utilize the follow-up materials located on NYSDOL's Workforce Synergy Forum webpage. At each forum, local leaders or experts not only share best practices and resources so

other professionals do not reinvent efforts but also internalize and apply the practices to their regional needs.

From December 2023 to December 2025, the topics explored at Synergy Forums include, but are not limited to:

- Program Monitoring Discussion with Local and State Staff;
- Fiscal Monitoring Preparation;
- OSOS Tips for Managers Brainstorm with WIOA Program Service Delivery Leaders;
- Synergy Scenes: Tools and Tips for an Impactful Workforce System;
- Tools for Frontline Staff Training;
- Design Thinking for Partnership Building;
- Cultivating Human-Centered Organizations and Interactions;
- Program Outreach: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly with three (3) follow-up Mastermind group sessions;
- Strategies for Adult Priority of Service with three (3) follow-up Mastermind group sessions;
- Planning for Basic Skills Services;
- Mental Health Supports in Employment Services;
- Possibilities of WIOA Youth Programs;
- Renewable Energy Training Initiative Outreach to Disadvantaged Communities;
- AI in the Workforce System;
- OJT Processes and Marketing to Businesses; and
- Regional Business Services Teams.

To develop these Synergy Forums, approximately 55 WIOA Title I staff, NYSDOL staff, and other partners collaborated with a minimum of 220 learning hours. Applying adult learning theories and trauma-informed principles has helped staff continually evolve the Synergy Forum into a learning space with a growing number of attendees, where titles and egos of hierarchy are set aside for transforming our workforce system one step at a time to reach its potential. About 1,985 staff have attended the forums live, while about 485 have reviewed the recordings. About 210 individuals met with the mastermind groups that emerged from the Synergy Forums to ideate in small groups. Seven (7) training supplements or briefs were developed, and at least 15 creative online tools were utilized to enhance the learning of workforce professionals.

Jails to Jobs, Work for Success, and Re-entry

Correctional education programs reduce the likelihood that incarcerated individuals will re-offend and greatly increase their chances of obtaining employment after being released. To facilitate this, the NYS Jails to Jobs initiative was implemented in 2022, providing previously incarcerated individuals with the support they need to access education and find employment during their re-entry transition. One part of this initiative includes lifting the 30-year ban on the Tuition Assistance Program for incarcerated persons.

The NYS Division of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services provide evidence-based training and other labor-focused development

programs, ensuring that all NYS parole and probation professionals are prepared to support each individual's return to their family and community. This includes career planning and job placement training for NYS DOCCS parole officers and NYSDOL re-entry specialists.

NYSDOL and DOCCS have partnered under the Jails to Jobs initiative to streamline the pre-release transition process for incarcerated individuals, with the goal of running a pilot program that connects these individuals with their local Career Centers while they are still incarcerated.

The Work for Success (WFS) initiative allows businesses in NYS to partner with NYSDOL by offering employment opportunities for justice-involved applicants seeking employment. The initiative encourages good corporate citizenship, a commitment, or pledge, by businesses to consider qualified individuals with criminal convictions for employment.

To identify which individuals can be referred to Career Centers under WFS, DOCCS uses a risk and needs assessment called the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS). DOCCS staff identify inmates soon to be released to community supervision who:

1. Have a COMPAS Risk Level of 4, which indicates the lowest risk of reoffending; and
2. Have a COMPAS Employment Need level of 5 or lower, which indicates that they are individuals who are ready to seek employment.

This program has been in operation at several Career Centers throughout NYS since 2012 and is in the process of being reinvigorated after the disruption of COVID-19.

Reentry Unit Staff are responsible for writing and editing a publication called, “The Prime Objective,” which provides job preparation and employment guidance to individuals being released from incarceration, as well as individuals with previous justice involvement.

The Federal Bonding Program is administered through NYSDOL and is overseen by the Re-entry Unit. This program is a hiring incentive that provides a fidelity bond to businesses that hire individuals from a variety of job-seeker groups, including those with involvement in the criminal justice system. A Federal Bonding Program Demonstration Grant received from USDOL in 2019 provided NYSDOL with 850 fidelity bonds that could be provided to businesses that hired justice-involved individuals and/or those who are in active recovery from opioid and other drug addictions. In addition, funding was provided to market the program to businesses, eligible job seekers, and other NYS stakeholders.

Re-entry Unit staff provide training to Local Bonding Coordinators in Career Centers across NYS who assist job seekers and businesses with using the Federal Bonding Program. Virtual webinars are provided monthly to job seekers covering a wide variety of re-entry topics that impact those having previous legal history. Technical assistance is provided as requested to both businesses looking to hire or bond those who are justice-involved and to job seekers who are facing unique problems or challenges regarding the barriers resulting from their legal histories. Re-entry staff attend and support three (3) of the Statewide Re-entry Task Forces. Staff also provides information on NYSDOL programs and services for this group of job seekers as well as the educators and other professionals who serve them at conferences, correctional facility re-entry fairs, and virtual job fairs.

Literacy Zones

Literacy Zones are reform initiatives through NYSED/ACCES-AEPP aimed at closing the achievement gap in urban and rural communities with concentrated poverty and high concentrations of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency. Geographically defined as one (1) or more adjacent census tracts using U.S. Census Bureau data, NYSED has identified 67 Literacy

Zones across NYS. Literacy Zones were strategically created within concentrated communities to connect participants to programs. With the increased need for services in certain areas, many Literacy Zones have had to juggle changes in redistricting and shifting demographics, as these services are dependent on census tracts.

Services Provided by Literacy Zones:

- Case Management for out-of-school youth and adults to pursue a NYSED HSE diploma, ELA and or postsecondary education, training, and employment;
- Internet connected computer lab with literacy instruction to teach use of computers and prepare participants to take assessments leading to an HSE diploma;
- Resource library of materials and access to technology;
- Case Management referral services to other educational programs for adult/child disability concerns;
- Case Management and referrals to Career Center and workforce partners including workforce training, Virtual Career Center, and apprenticeship programs;
- Annual career fair within the Literacy Zone; and
- Family Welcome Centers within each Literacy Zone that provide resources for the entire family.

Coursera

NYSDOL partners with Coursera, the leading online training provider, to provide New Yorkers access to thousands of courses across high-growth industries and the ability to hone skills in data science, business, technology, and more. Many of these programs are pathways to certifications, professional certificates, and can help individuals elevate their career. Since the program's launch in late 2020, more than 140,000 individuals have logged 2.2 million hours of learning in the following top courses:

- Foundations: Data, Data, Everywhere;
- Foundations of Project Management;
- Foundations of Cybersecurity;
- Foundations of Digital Marketing and E-commerce;
- Technical Support Fundamentals;
- Supervised Machine Learning: Regression and Classification;
- Bookkeeping Basics;
- Ask Question to Make Data-Driven Decisions;
- Design Fundamentals with AI; and
- Programming for Everybody (Getting Started with Python).

Workforce Development Best Practices

ESD/OSWD, in partnership with Jobs for the Future and HR&A Advisors, has prepared a series of resources detailing important features of high-impact workforce development training programs including providing career pathways, inclusive staffing, assessing job quality, prioritizing target industries, and providing wraparound supports.

These "best practice" briefings are intended to provide a general background of these important program features and actionable advice for incorporating these strategies into programming, as well as additional resources for review. They are not meant to be a formula or directive, but rather to offer guidance as to the kinds of services, community relationships, and industry focus that have been identified as essential for developing programs supportive of the economic and social challenges facing both industry and job seekers.

They serve as a resource for both prospective and current ESD/OSWD grantees, as well as the larger workforce development community, to further ESD/OSWD's goals of developing and promoting inclusive and impactful programs, expanding opportunities to marginalized communities, and promoting economic growth across NYS.

Resources:

- Guided Career Pathways;
- Inclusive Employer Recruitment Strategies;
- Defining Job Quality;
- Target Industries; and
- Wraparound Supports.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

a. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include–

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision-making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

State Board

The State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) is the governance body for workforce programs in New York State (NYS). Appointed by the Governor and the NYS Legislature, membership includes WIOA-required partners of business, labor unions, local government, NYS Executive and Legislative branches, and other representatives with experience addressing the workforce needs of those with barriers to employment. These members represent a variety of regional and industry perspectives and bring with them a multitude of workforce development skills.

The SWIB currently has three (3) committees; Executive, Strategic Investments and Evaluation, and Career and Industry. The Executive Committee is made up of the SWIB Chair and the Chair and Vice Chair of each of the two (2) other committees, and is responsible for the overall management, direction, and oversight of the SWIB. The Strategic Investments and Evaluation Committee focuses on evaluating workforce programs for best practices, ensuring alignment between workforce and

education related to demand and Labor Market Information, researching non-federal funding opportunities, and working with the State partners to establish performance goals and incentives. The Career and Industry Committee is focused on building regional linkages between education/training and demand industry sectors, determining how these linkages can be implemented for specific sector strategies, establishing an inventory of business resources across NYS, and ensuring all job seekers have the digital skills required to succeed in the workforce, particularly with the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence technologies.

Through discussion of specific workforce challenges and the more-in depth committee work related to new and on-going State initiatives, the SWIB determines strategies for broader System improvement. These strategies are then advanced by the Executive Committee as recommendations to advise the Governor, Board of Regents, and Regional Economic Development Councils on workforce development policy.

NYSDOL staff serves as staff to the Board, assisting in managing its many responsibilities. Other partner agencies and entities also serve as subject matter experts as needed.

Key responsibilities of SWIB members include, but are not limited to:

- Development and review of the Combined State Plan;
- Review of Statewide policies and programs involving workforce development to develop recommendations for an accessible and inclusive System;
- Development of strategies for aligning core and other programs;
- Improving access to the System, especially for those with barriers to employment;
- Supporting industry partnerships, career pathways, and regional sector strategies;
- Disseminating best practices to the System; and
- Supporting the Career Center System and all core program delivery systems.

The SWIB meets quarterly to continually establish, and if necessary, evolve the goals and strategies for the System; determine how to best support those with the most significant barriers to education, training, and employment; and discuss the current and upcoming work of the committees to ensure workforce needs are met.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.A.	
LMI	Labor Market Information

LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSOFA	New York State Office for the Aging
OASAS	Office for Alcohol and Substance Abuse
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OMH/NYESS	Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System
SFM	State Funding Mechanism
SWIB	State Workforce Investment Board
System	Workforce Development System
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity New Act

To implement York State's (NYS's) strategy, its core programs have and will continue to seek to achieve several goals for the Career Center System. These goals ensure that Titles I, II, III, and IV work together to align and coordinate services, providing job seekers and businesses seamless service delivery in a way that advances the implementation of NYS's strategy by creating a unified System. These goals include:

- Aligning workforce development and economic development functions to create systems that align the needs of businesses with job seeking customers, including individuals with disabilities;
- Incentivizing robust business partnerships to best inform workforce decision-making at all levels of the System;
- Recognizing the essential role of education and literacy, including digital literacy, as the foundation for a strong, versatile workforce;
- Providing priority to serving New Yorkers who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, including English Language Learners, in addition to continuing to provide priority to veterans and their eligible spouses;
- Sharing labor market data across workforce partners to inform policy and service decisions;
- Developing training for front-line program delivery staff to provide efficient and seamless services with other mandated programs and partners; and
- Continuing to integrate information technology to improve service delivery.

The Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth and Title III Wagner-Peyser programs, overseen by New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL), have and will continue to communicate with Title II programs, overseen by New York State Education Department (NYSED), and Title IV programs, overseen by NYSED and Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB), to ensure customers are provided appropriate referrals for services they require, and that staff from all core programs are trained on the services available from each title.

To implement the State strategy for coordinating service delivery, and as part of the local area WIOA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the core and additional mandatory System partners identified the basic and individualized career services they provide. All core partners provide outreach, intake, and system orientation; initial assessment; referrals to programs; referrals to

supportive services; comprehensive assessment; and career planning and counseling. Additionally, individual titles of WIOA provide the following services:

- Titles I and III – Eligibility for Title I services, labor exchange services, Labor Market Information (LMI), performance on the local workforce system, UI information and assistance, financial aid information (Title I only), individual employment plans, short-term pre-vocational services (Title I only), internships and work experiences (Title I only), out-of-area job search and relocation assistance, financial literacy services, English language acquisition and integrated education, workforce preparation, and follow-up services.
- Title II – Financial aid information, financial literacy services, English language acquisition and integrated education, workforce preparation, and follow-up services.
- Title IV – LMI, financial aid information, individual employment plans, short-term pre-vocational services, internships and work experiences, out-of-area job search and relocation assistance, and financial literacy services.

The Infrastructure Funding portion of the MOU addresses the allocation of costs and sharing of resources to support the System.

In Program Year 2020, the WIOA Interagency Team developed local MOU guidance that was shared with NYS's Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Directors for completion of the MOU. As of June 30, 2020, all local MOUs were submitted for review, with LWDBs and partners required to re-review and update the document at least once every three (3) years. As of January 2026, there are 22 LWDBs with fully executed MOUs. NYSDOL, NYSED, and OCFS continue to work with all remaining LWDBs to finalize the MOUs and obtain signatures from all required partners

Currently, Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) have developed local funding mechanisms to allocate infrastructure funding costs amongst the One-Stop partners. If a LWDA triggers the State Funding Mechanism (SFM), One-Stop partners will be afforded an opportunity to appeal determinations by NYS associated with the partner's allocation under the SFM. Any appeal(s) will be directed to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) for review, in conjunction with the Governor. An appeal can be accepted from any, or all, of the local One-Stop partners subject to the SFM.

Appeals must be:

- Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of infrastructure cost allocation under the SFM;
- Submitted to the NYSDOL Director of NYSDOL/Office of Workforce Development; and
- Provided concurrently to any other local One-Stop partners affected by, but not parties to, the appeal.

The appeal must clearly identify the disputed aspects of the determination and demonstrate how the basis of the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of the SFM.

NYS will respond to any appeal within 30 days of receipt. If a response is not possible within 30 days, NYS will notify the appellant (and any other local One-Stop partner) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a decision will be issued.

One-Stop Operators (System Operators) are the entities that coordinate the service delivery of required Career Center partners and service providers. While able to perform additional functions if so desired by the LWDBs, this coordination role is the minimum requirement of the local area

System Operator. LWDBs currently either have a System Operator in place or they are in the process of procuring new One-Stop Operator agreements. As LWDAs may extend contracts up to three (3) years if they choose, the One-Stop Operator procurement process is always ongoing. Five (5) local areas will be required to procure a new System Operator in 2026, while all others have contracts beyond that period.

A priority for all partner programs in the System, and the System as a whole, is to quickly respond to the needs of the local communities and its businesses and workforce, and to continually evolve to address those needs. The further alignment and consolidation of programs and activities, and the identification of areas where further sharing and coordination of efforts can occur, will continue to be a priority of the SWIB as well as the individual programs in the System. The SWIB is tasked with examining ways to improve coordination of workforce programs to avoid unnecessary duplication and better align services. Career Center System operations will continue to be streamlined as common data systems, administrative procedures, and performance measures are further developed and utilized by the partners. Shared input and access to information by partners, cross-training of staff, and coordinated program planning will further streamline and enhance the services and operations in the local systems.

Local partnerships, which form the foundation of the System, are especially effective in meeting the workforce needs of NYS's diverse population. Local plans describe how these partnerships will be coordinated to enable all customers to receive the full range of employment and training programs and supportive services, especially those that lead to jobs in high-wage, high-growth occupations along career pathways. The needs of individuals with multiple barriers to employment are being addressed quickly and thoroughly due to the wide spectrum of service providers joined together under the local workforce system. New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), NYSED (including NYSED/ACCES-VR), New York State Department of Health, OCFS (including OCFS/NYSCB), the Office for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OASAS), Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, State University of New York, NYSDOL, and local Community-Based Organizations apply knowledge gained through regular communication, partnership collaborations, and cross-training to develop comprehensive service strategies to address the varying needs of our common participants. With the functional alignment approach and common customer flow in the Career Centers, partners are more aware of each agency's involvement with the participant instead of working in a vacuum. This greatly helps reduce duplication of services to participants.

NYS also successfully integrated several employment services systems into a single system, using the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant as a catalyst. This comprehensive employment system is Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System (OMH/NYESS) and provides all New Yorkers, regardless of their (dis)ability, with a single point of access to all employment-related services and supports, including job matching with jobs posted by businesses on the NYS Job Bank, which maintains a daily average of more than 230,000 job openings. OMH/NYESS includes the following State-level agencies: OMH, NYSDOL, NYSED, OASAS, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, NYSOFA, and the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. Providers of employment-related supports and services licensed by, or contracting with, one (1) of the participating State agencies are also able to sign up to utilize this system. OMH/NYESS creates the ability to centralize employment service/support information, greatly improving the ability to coordinate employment supports and services among multiple providers and across multiple systems.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and

technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.B.	
CSBG	Community Services Block Grant
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DDBHHO	Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Office
DOH	Department of Health
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSDOL/OWD	New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
OJET	Office of Just Energy Transition
OTDA	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
PA	Public Assistance
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RI	Related Instruction
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

This Plan is primarily focused on the goals and operations of the core programs; however, the Career Center System involves a variety of partner programs to support the core. In addition, the State Workforce Investment Board continues to reinforce the goal of cross-System integration at the governance level to solicit input beyond the core partner programs. This section discusses relevant details for notable partner programs, including those that are driving the future of work in New York State (NYS).

NYS's Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO)

Established in February 2022 by Governor Kathy Hochul, The Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO) advocates on behalf of people with disabilities. The CDO works to break down silos between NYS agencies that provide services to people with disabilities; pushes for progress on Statewide accessibility issues; provides a disability perspective on policy proposals, legislation, and NYS agency operations; and diligently connects with communities and advocates on a wide spectrum of disability issues.

The CDO's aggressive initiatives include:

- Employment First – Governor Hochul signed Executive Order No. 40 establishing NYS as an Employment First (E1st) State in 2024. E1st is a national movement built upon the principle that employment should be the first and preferred option for people being served by our disability public health system, and that Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) be not just a primary goal, but an expectation, even for those with the most significant disabilities. E1st is a civil rights, economic, public health, and workforce issue that requires deep public policy, cultural, social, and economic progress to become a reality.

- State as a Model Employer (SAME) – Governor Hochul signed Executive Order No. 31 committing NYS to Becoming a Model Employer for People With Disabilities in 2023. SAME commits each State agency, in collaboration with the CDO, to develop an annual plan that details the steps the agency will take to improve the hiring of people with disabilities and disability inclusiveness, as well as improve the percentage of people with disabilities hired at each agency.
- Most Integrated Settings Coordination Council (MISCC) – The MISCC is a cross-systems partnership consisting of representatives from multiple NYS agencies and nine (9) appointed public representatives with an interest in ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages with physical, intellectual, developmental, sensory, and mental health disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their individual needs. Together, these representatives and agencies, in partnership and collaboration with public advocates and community-based partners, are working hard to ensure that all New Yorkers with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to live lives of inclusion where people live, work, travel, and engage in their community. Updating the NYS 2013 Olmstead Plan and producing annual iterations is a focus of the CDO and the MISCC's work.
- NYS's Olmstead Plan – CDO is drafting an update to NYS's Olmstead Plan, which is being informed by several committees, including the Employment Subcommittee. Appointed stakeholders are drafting goals specifically aimed at the employment and economic domain of Olmstead and will be aligned with E1st work. The work of the MISCC also aligns with the goals and priorities of E1st due to its emphasis on CIE. This committee, which is comprised of various NYS agency representatives and private sector advocates, will provide recommendations to the MISCC in accomplishing its goals and objectives related to employment.
- Disability Rights and Employment Awareness Month (DREAM) Symposium – The CDO, in partnership with co-sponsoring agencies, leads the annual DREAM event in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month to acknowledge the rights that people with disabilities are entitled to, celebrate the extreme value disabled New Yorkers bring to the workforce, and assist in matching prospective qualified candidates with employers.
- Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) – Building on the successful program developed in partnership with Advocacy, Humanity, Reimagination, and Change (AHRC) New York City; the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities; and NYSED/ACCES-VR, the Statewide PII advances NYS's goal of becoming a model employer by creating internship opportunities in NYS agencies for individuals with disabilities that may lead to long-term employment. As of October 14, 2025, 13 interns have been successfully placed leading to two (2) permanent hires in NYS employment.
- The Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Office (DDBHHO) – DDBHHO was established by Governor Hochul in January 2024. Christopher Woodfill was appointed Executive Director and Rachel Cahill was appointed as Chris' American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, assistant, and access advocate. DDBHHO is an integral part of the CDO team. The office focuses on three (3) primary priorities:
    1. Access to language;
    2. Access to communication; and
    3. Access to information for the DDBHH communities.

- Interagency Coordinating Council on Services to Persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (IAC) – IAC was signed into law in 2007, fully established in 2009, and operated until 2013 when it went inactive. It is currently being re-established and will be the primary vehicle for the DDBHH communities to have their voices heard and acted upon in NYS government, including in areas related to employment and economic outcomes.

NYSDOL's Office of Just Energy Transition (OJET)

NYSDOL's Office of Just Energy Transition's (OJET's) mission is to connect workers to opportunities for quality jobs, upskilling, and training with a focus on serving traditionally underrepresented and Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and incumbent fossil fuel workers. OJET also assists businesses by upskilling their workers and connecting them to a trained workforce while helping navigate eligible hiring incentives and available funding.

OJET was created as recommended by the NYS Scoping Plan (the framework established by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) to achieve the State's renewable energy and emissions goals). The NYS Build Public Renewables Act allows New York Power Authority to provide NYSDOL (OJET) with up to $25M annually for workforce training and retraining in the renewable energy field.

Since 2023, OJET has launched two (2) innovative funding opportunities, both with strong wraparound services components and the requirement that at least 35% of individuals or businesses served are within DACs.

1. Growing the Clean Energy Workforce (GCEW) – $5M awarded through a competitive request for proposal to fund 11 programs that are expanding or creating clean energy training or pre-apprenticeship programs; and
2. Renewable Energy Training Initiative (RETI) – Nearly $4M awarded to 19 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) for the upskilling or reskilling of individuals interested in clean/renewable energy training. Local areas have the option to co-enroll participants in WIOA.

OJET also created the Green Topics Dashboard to assist job seekers, educators, and training providers in identifying skills and occupations within the clean energy economy. The dashboard includes 72 green topics and over 300 occupations.

OJET's legislative requirements include:

- Creating a process to allow employers and displaced and transitioning workers, including affected labor organizations, to notify NYSDOL of the loss of employment, their previous title, and previous wage rates, including whether they previously received medical benefits, retirement benefits, and/or other benefits from climate risk-related and energy transition projects;
- Creating a method for NYSDOL to communicate names and contact information for displaced or transitioning workers to public entities that may have job opportunities for such workers every ninety (90) days; and
- Creating a program, where feasible, for newly created job opportunities to be offered to a pool of transitioning workers who have lost their employment or will be losing their employment in the energy sector due to climate risk-related and energy transition projects.

OJET's additional work in the coming years will include:

- Partnering with NYSERDA's Energy Equity Collaborative (EEC) to gain a deeper understanding of the unique needs and challenges of achieving equitable participation in NYS clean energy programs and policies. The key goal of the EEC is to secure community feedback in the early stages of a program or policy to ensure the needs of residents are a key consideration in NYS planning efforts;
- Organizing industry stakeholder meetings with companies working in the clean energy space to ascertain their workforce and training needs and capacity; and
- Developing a roadmap of where NYS funding is needed to support the successful transition of individuals, with a focus on DACs, over the next five (5) years.

Master Plan for Aging (MPA)

NYS has the fourth-largest population of older adults in the U.S., with 3.2 million individuals, about 16%of the population, over age 65. The population of those over the age of 60 is projected to grow to 5.3 million by 2030, with those over 80 years of age exceeding 1.2 million, growing faster than any other age group in some areas of NYS. By 2030, older adults will make up 25-30% of the population in most NYS counties.[10]

Under the leadership of Governor Hochul, NYS has released the Master Plan for Aging (MPA), designed to ensure that older adults and individuals of all ages can live healthy, fulfilling lives while aging with dignity and independence, which includes working in fulfilling careers for as long as they wish to. The plan also emphasizes recruiting and training the direct care workforce, which is vital for older adults. The MPA will provide a range of strategies for State agencies, the Legislature, stakeholders, and partners to consider as NYS pursues policies, programs, and collaborations that will benefit older adults and their families.

Teacher Ambassador Program

NYS public schools are a critical partner in our workforce development strategy. Our P-12 school system plays a vital role in students' growth not only in educational attainment and social-emotional skills, but also in workforce development. As many students move through the P-12 system, they learn about academic subject areas but may not engage in career readiness training through career exploration and work-based learning.

To support the design and implementation of career-readiness curricula Statewide, in July 2023, NYSDOL and NYSED launched the first Teacher Ambassador Program, a four-week paid summer intensive program that prepares teachers, certified work-based learning coordinators, library media specialists, and school counselors to develop, implement, and deliver 21st century career-readiness curricula or strategies to students throughout NYS. As of July 2025, the Teacher Ambassador Program has completed its third cohort, engaging 151 educators whose collective impact reaches more than 25,000 students Statewide.

Teacher Ambassadors are paid NYSDOL employees, acquiring the strategies and tools to align classroom instruction with career exploration to build future pathways to employment though:

- Engaging in regional workforce programs and touring local businesses/industries (i.e. Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Financial Services);

[10] https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-releases-first-ever-master-plan-aging-offering-roadmap-aging-new-yorkers

- Meeting with key business members for informational interviews (i.e., HR, learning and development, workforce, apprentices, journey workers, and interns);
- Exploring possible shadowing opportunities;
- Gaining valuable information on Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and connecting with sponsors in their regions;
- Understanding business needs including hiring trends, retention, upskilling, and industry forecasts, Labor Market Information and research, and changes impacting regional job markets;
- Participating in a professional development bootcamp; and
- Developing career-readiness curricula that can be implemented and delivered at their respective schools, with prior approval of school leadership and/or district administration. The curricula include components covered during the four (4) weeks, including professional development, industry-specific career exploration, and skill development. Curricula delivery and contextualized instruction will vary by school/district and will continue to occur in partnership with school/district leadership, NYSDOL, and local workforce partners.

Since the program's launch, all ten (10) of NYS's economic regions have been represented by educators and more than 200 industry partners participated Statewide.

Teacher Ambassadors who successfully complete the program receive a Certificate of Completion from NYSDOL along with Continuing Teacher and Leadership Education credit. The collaboration between NYSDOL and the Teacher Ambassadors extends well beyond the four (4)-week program. Based on internal data collection, only 29% of the 2024 Teacher Ambassadors had ever used NYSDOL as a resource prior to the program. By January 2025, however, 90% of this cohort reported reaching out to NYSDOL for support, with 45% having engaged more than three (3) times already within the school year. This ongoing support includes student workshops, school presentations, and staff development. Building on this success, the program will continue to expand in the coming years, reaching more sites, engaging additional participants, and deepening its impact on students and schools across NYS.

The Office of Health Care Workforce Innovation

The Office of Health Care Workforce Innovation was established in 2022 within DOH to address NYS's health workforce shortage through competitive grants and policy recommendations. Initiatives include:

- Area Health Education Center Program – Invests $2.7M annually to increase the supply, distribution, and diversification of qualified healthcare professionals. Community-based programs across the State provide K-12 career exposure, graduate-level clinical rotations, and continuing education for clinicians. Funding is dispersed to the Research Foundation of the State University of New York (RF SUNY) Buffalo.
- Increasing Training Capacity in Statewide Healthcare Facilities – Invests up to $32.5M annually over five years to expand healthcare workforce training across NYS. This competitive grant program supports Article 28 not-for-profit healthcare facilities in building and strengthening their capacity to train current and future healthcare workers. In the first round of funding, 42 projects were awarded, generally focused on increasing the supply of nurses. Applications for the second round of funding were accepted in October 2025 with contracting in October 2026.

- Health Care Education and Life Skills Grant Program – Invests up to $19.5M annually over five years to support students and trainees pursuing healthcare careers. This program addresses healthcare workforce shortages by increasing graduation/completion rates among students/trainees by assessing the barriers to completion and providing the necessary supports required for success. Twenty-one projects were awarded with anticipated contracting in January 2026.
- Health Workforce Connects – Invests up to $4M on an integrated portal to serve as a robust resource for those exploring or pursuing careers in healthcare. This hub will act as a conduit to link end-users to organizations, agencies, resources, and information including but not limited to employers, educational institutions, training programs, data, and research. A Request for Information is schedule for release in winter 2026, followed by a Request for Proposal.
- Scholars in Medicine and Science, Scholarship in Medicine (formerly Diversity in Medicine) – Invests $4.9M annually to recruit and train medical students who will commit to future practice in NYS shortage areas.

Registered Apprenticeship (RA)

Since NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) oversees the WIOA Title I Adult, DW, and Youth programs; Title III Wagner-Peyser Act program; and the NYS RA Program, there is inherent alignment of these programs and RA is marketed as a viable opportunity to individuals receiving services at Career Centers throughout NYS, including:

- Apprentice recruitment announcements are posted on the NYSDOL RA website and the NYS Job Bank, connecting RA program sponsors and unemployed and underemployed individuals to the System;
- The NYSDOL CareerZone website, which targets youth, was integrated with the RA website to provide career information for each of the apprenticeable trades/occupations. It allows individuals to explore careers and apprenticeable trades/occupations related to their individual strengths, skills, and talents;
- RA staff participate in monthly NYSDOL/OWD meetings to provide information and updates to all NYSDOL/OWD staff related to RA and RA provides an "Apprenticeship 101" training as necessary to NYSDOL/OWD staff; and
- RA staff in some regions of NYS are stationed within the Career Centers, which facilitates direct communication amongst RA and Career Center staff. This includes working with individuals responsible for Business Services and Veterans Programs.

NYSDOL/OWD recently created The Office for Special Initiatives, which includes a team of Registered Apprenticeship Business Navigators ("Navigators"). The team's mission is to expand the number of businesses operating NYS RA programs by identifying areas of opportunity and facilitating program access. As of September 2025, there are currently three (3) Navigators; one (1) each in Plattsburgh, Elmira, and White Plains. The Navigators focus on:

- Creating new RA opportunities in non-traditional and high demand industries like Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing;
- Business outreach, program application assistance, and recruiting assistance;
- Leveraging other workforce programs, units, and resources to holistically serve businesses; and

- Working closely with SUNY partners to promote available grant funding to offset the cost of related classroom instruction.

NYSDOL works closely with NYSED, which is responsible for oversight and approval of the related instruction (RI) component of RA programs, including their section of the training outline for every trade/occupation and the completion of required RI by apprentices. This partnership contributes to successful completion of the RI portion of each RA program.

NYSDOL is committed to increasing the value of RAs for employers. A new RA data system built on the Microsoft Dynamics platform includes a public-facing portal with secure login allowing sponsors to more seamlessly enroll new apprentices online.

RA is an important component of the NYS System. It is incorporated in detail throughout this Plan, including how RA is the gold standard for work-based training models in Sections VI.b.1. and how NYS incorporates RA into its strategy for service design and delivery in Section VI.b.2.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

In NYS, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is State supervised and locally operated by the 58 social services districts (57 counties and the City of New York). TANF employment service delivery varies from county to county depending on local needs and resources. The TANF State Plan is updated every three (3) years by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

In addition, every two (2) years, each district in NYS is responsible for developing an Employment Plan in consultation with local workforce and educational partners, including WIOA partners and LWDBs, as well as other community-based providers, that describes their local employment operations for TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. As part of this plan, districts must identify how they provide access to the programs and services at local Career Centers and describe their coordination with Career Center partners to enhance service delivery, maximize resources, and improve client participation.

In some counties, social services district staff are co-located at Career Centers while others contract with local workforce providers for all or a portion of their employment services. In other counties, social services districts provide employment services both directly and through contracts with community providers.

NYS is committed to the strong functional alignment of programs and, with TANF as a mandatory WIOA partner, has continued to seek ways to enhance partnerships to improve service delivery for NYS residents. As mentioned earlier in the Plan, OTDA, which is responsible for NYS administration of the TANF-funded program, is an active member of the NYS WIOA Interagency Team and various sub-workgroups. Through these workgroups, NYS will ensure communication remains strong among NYS WIOA partners and that cross-training needs related to Public Assistance (PA) programs are identified and addressed with appropriate materials and training.

To facilitate a direct linkage to various public benefit programs, Career Centers have the myBenefits (myBenefits.ny.gov) website shortcut icon on resource room computers. MyBenefits was developed to help increase access and awareness of various public benefit programs. Applicants can use myBenefits to apply for the following programs: PA; SNAP; Medicaid and SNAP; Medicaid and PA;

services, including Foster Care and Child Care Assistance; Child Care in lieu of PA; and emergency assistance only.

MyBenefits includes a screening tool which takes about ten (10) minutes for an individual to enter their required information into, and it takes seconds for the system to conclude what services or public benefit programs that individual might be qualified to receive. Several program pre-screenings are supported through myBenefits, including PA; SNAP; Nutrition Education; Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); School Meals; NYS State Supplement Program (SSP); public health insurance options; and a range of tax credits including federal and State earned income tax credits.

Once an individual enters their information on the site, a summary report is generated. This report indicates the services or public benefit programs for which that individual appears to be eligible. Each category of service will give them an idea of what they can expect from that specific program. Some programs provide hot links directly to the individual's on-line applications while others provide phone numbers for additional information and/or directions on how to apply for public benefits and what documentation is required.

At the conclusion of the individual's report, a self-sufficiency calculator is generated. This calculator gives the individual the opportunity to graph their earnings and potential supplemental earnings in chart format, giving the individual a clear picture of their financial situation and of the benefits gained by working.

Social services districts and Career Centers are encouraged to clearly establish liaisons to serve as a point person(s) for each other on day-to-day client cross-system needs. For instance, Career Center partners can contact their social services district liaison when specific questions regarding TANF, or other public benefit programs under their purview, arise with customers that cannot be addressed through myBenefits. A Career Center liaison is responsible for coordinating major workforce initiatives, recruitments, and training programs with the social services district so a broader range of residents can benefit from these efforts and the various agencies involved can leverage resources.

To support the WIOA Adult Program priority to serve individuals who receive PA, NYS expects each LWDA to establish specific procedures to consult with the Social Services Commissioners on the provision of prioritizing services to youth and the availability of job skills training and job readiness activities provided by Career Center partners. Areas are also expected to establish streamlined procedures to enable social services districts to enroll PA recipients and other low-income individuals in these services.

NYS agencies delivering workforce services will continue to collaborate on workforce policies, trainings, and service delivery. This collaboration includes a review of labor market data by region, dissemination of labor market data to workforce providers, and collaboration on funding and policy decisions. For example, OTDA created the Venture V program, which leverages eligible non-federal resources to help reimburse providers of training, education, and supportive services for recipients of SNAP/Safety Net Assistance and non-Temporary Assistance SNAP. Services contracted through Venture V help eligible individuals address barriers to obtaining and keeping employment including physical and mental work limitations, limited literacy or English proficiency, lack of a high school diploma, history of substance abuse, or having a limited work history.

NYS places specific emphasis on the coordination of youth services to allow youth served through the social services districts to also have access to specialized youth services delivered through WIOA. This partnership is intended to improve the recruitment of OSY and improve the range and quality of services available to this population.

NYS will not impose unfunded mandates requiring social services districts and the Career Centers to co-locate when local areas have mutually determined that co-location is not the best way to provide customer service, or for social services districts to establish a physical on-site presence at the Career Centers. Instead, NYS will allow flexibility for social services districts to develop service strategies that meet the needs of the local area and create a direct linkage referral process to TANF services via technology or direct contact with Social Service staff. Key WIOA-TANF partnership services include:

- The prescreening functionality of the myBenefits and ACCESS New York City portals;
- The provision of TANF applications and meaningful program-specific information/outreach material; and/or
- Direct connection to Social Service staff at the Career Centers.

Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

NYSED's Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE), with the Office of Postsecondary Access, Support, and Success, is required to complete its own four (4)-year plan for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, informally known as Perkins V. Perkins V took effect July 1, 2019, marking the beginning of a one (1)-year Transition Year. Utilizing stakeholder input, the four (4)-year plan was developed during the Transition Year and covered the period of July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024. This plan was modified in the 2024-2025 program year to include extended flexibilities for middle level CTE programs and newly developing secondary CTE programs.

The purpose of the Perkins V Act is to more fully develop the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in CTE programs and programs of study by:

1. Building on the efforts of states and localities to develop challenging academic and technical standards and to assist students in meeting such standards, including preparation for high skill, high wage, or in-demand occupations in current or emerging professions;
2. Promoting the development of services and activities that integrate rigorous and challenging academic career and technical instruction, that link secondary education and postsecondary education for participating CTE students;
3. Increasing State and local flexibility in providing services and activities designed to develop, implement, and improve CTE;
4. Conducting and disseminating national research and disseminating information on best practices that improve CTE programs and programs of study, services, and activities;
5. Providing technical assistance that:
    a. Promotes leadership, initial preparation, and professional development at the State and local levels; and
    b. Improves the quality of CTE teachers, faculty, administrators, and counselors;

6. Supporting partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, area CTE schools, LWDBs, business and industry, and intermediaries;
7. Providing individuals with opportunities throughout their lifetimes to develop, in conjunction with other education and training programs, the knowledge and skills needed to keep the US competitive; and
8. Increasing the employment opportunities for populations who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, including individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families; out-of-workforce individuals; youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and homeless individuals.

Perkins V identifies three (3) postsecondary Indicators of Performance that align with WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance:

1. Postsecondary Retention and Placement (1P1): The percentage of CTE concentrators who, during the 2nd quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education, are in advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under Title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511 et seq.), are volunteers as described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)), or are placed or retained in employment, as aligned with WIOA;
2. Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential (2P1): The percentage of CTE concentrators who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one (1) year of program completion; and
    - NYSED/CTE utilizes the WIOA definition of a recognized postsecondary credential as "A credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an RA program, a license recognized by the State or federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree."

      Note: A student is counted under this indicator whether the student obtains the credential during participation or within one (1) year of completion, meaning that the student would be counted if the student obtains the credential in the one (1) year following that student's completion of the program.
3. Non-traditional Program Enrollment (3P1): The percentage of CTE concentrators in CTE programs and programs of study that lead to non-traditional fields. (Sec. 113 (2B)).

Perkins V emphasizes increased coordination between secondary education, postsecondary education, and industry. All Perkins postsecondary grantees shall use a portion of their allocated funds to support their local Career Center System. Perkins grantees must also maintain information concerning the status of partnership with the LWDB to support the local System.

Under Perkins V, grantees are encouraged to coordinate with other education and workforce development programs and initiatives, including career pathways and sector partnerships developed under WIOA and other federal laws and initiatives, that provide students with transition-related services, including the IDEA.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

The NYS Department of State Division of Community Services oversees the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, a required WIOA partner, and participates on the WIOA Interagency Team to ensure maximum coordination of employment and training activities, and to foster collaboration and linkages among State agencies and providers of these activities. This includes the

CSBG network, which is comprised of local Community Action Agencies that are signatories to the local area Memorandums of Understanding.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.C.	
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATC	Assistive Technology Center
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services
CTE	Career and Technical Education
CUNY	City University of New York
DRC	Disability Resource Coordinator
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
IRT	Integrated Resource Team
LMI	Labor Market Information
NY SCION	New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
ON-RAMP	One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships
SUNY	State University of New York
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Understanding and Serving New Yorkers: A Focus on Customer Needs

To provide excellent, customer-focused services, we must understand the needs and desires of individuals and businesses from their perspective. This includes how they currently interact with our System. The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) conducts annual Statewide Business and Job Seeker Surveys to gather real-time feedback.

This document summarizes the results of these surveys and explains how New York State's (NYS) workforce development system delivers high-quality services based on direct feedback. It also shows how these efforts align with NYS's broader strategy to address complex, System-wide issues.

The survey results are particularly relevant to how we coordinate and provide services to individuals (Section III.a.2.C.) and businesses (Section III.a.2.D.). The initiatives discussed here also support other parts of this Plan, as serving New Yorkers in a coordinated way is central to NYS's strategy. These initiatives align with key principles of worker mobility, flexibility, and innovation highlighted in America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, demonstrating NYS's leadership in developing tech talent and becoming a global hub for Advanced Manufacturing. As "America's Talent Strategy" states, a modern workforce system must be built around the needs of its users.

NYSDOL Statewide Workforce Surveys

In 2021, The Business Council of NYS (Business Council) teamed up with NYSDOL to survey thousands of businesses on the challenges and needs in a world deeply changed by COVID-19. The results continue to shape workforce development practices and policy from the P-12 system to higher education and among training providers across NYS.

Since then, NYSDOL has partnered with The Business Council, Empire State Development and Regional Economic Development Councils, and the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) to annually gather real-time feedback on the state of the workforce and the needs of businesses and job seekers. Special thanks must be given to the NYS AFL-CIO and the Workforce Development Institute for their assistance in shaping survey questions.

From 2021 to present, 10,700 businesses and 30,600 job seekers engaged with the surveys. More than 2,600 unique business and 10,300 job seekers took part in the 2024 surveys.

Participation in survey questions is optional. Percentages shown represent the portion of total participants for each specific question and region (if applicable), not all survey participants. This document focuses on Statewide responses.

Main takeaways from the 2024 Surveys:

- The need for training and upskilling is persistent and growing;
- Worker flexibility is the future; and
- The lack of professional networks, experience, and credentials limit growth.

In 2024, businesses identified the quality of the available workforce as their top challenge. Other significant challenges included attracting new workers, inflation, and retaining current employees. Lack of experience remains the most common barrier to hiring, even more so than issues like childcare or transportation. Operational impacts are most frequently caused by attendance, work ethic, and motivation.

Businesses consistently reported a lack of both technical and non-technical skills among job applicants and new employees:

Non-Technical Skills Lacking (Statewide, All industries)	2021	2022	2023	2024
Self-motivation	64%	70%	61%	61%
Communication	66%	52%	56%	61%
Problem-solving/critical thinking	63%	48%	52%	59%
Timeliness/attendance	51%	55%	51%	50%
Attention to detail	58%	50%	46%	49%

Technical Skills Lacking (Statewide, All industries)	2021	2022	2023	2024
Basic computer use/computer literacy	47%	44%	48%	38%
Software proficiency in Excel	39%	32%	34%	34%
Email proficiency	19%	19%	22%	24%

Mechanical technical/engineering	23%	19%	22%	22%
Software proficiency in Word	23%	17%	19%	19%

Survey results reflected the incentives job seekers said would be most beneficial to them:

Incentive (Statewide)	**2023**	**2024**
Paid time off	35%	60%
Ability to work remotely full-time	36%	60%
Higher pay/higher starting pay	33%	59%
Ability to work remotely some of the time		53%
Health and wellness benefits	33%	50%
Flexibility to choose my own hours		49%

Job seekers identified barriers to employment such as lack of experience, insufficient credentials, limited professional networks, and age discrimination.

Businesses reported that teachers, administrative and sales positions, and engineers were the hardest roles to fill. Job seekers expressed interest in training for digital skills (Excel, AI), security, and administrative roles, emphasizing the need for flexible and affordable options. Initiatives are underway to connect job seekers with desired training and help employers fill these positions, as described below. Other relevant programs include State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) Reconnect and Apprenticeship Business Developers (in Sections III.a.2.E. and III.a.2.F. respectively).

Teacher Shortage

NYS, like many states, faces a teacher shortage. The U.S. Department of Education has identified ten (10) teacher shortage areas in NYS. Enrollment in NYS's teacher education programs has dropped by 53% since 2009, and a significant number of teachers are nearing retirement. NYS needs approximately 180,000 new teachers over the next decade to meet workforce needs.

We are addressing this shortage through collaborative efforts across various agencies. These programs seek to recruit, prepare, and increase the retention rate of teachers to address the challenges faced by hard-to-staff schools. These programs have the potential to recruit teachers in high-need subject areas and schools, while promoting greater diversity within the teaching profession. Candidates who complete registered residency programs and teacher preparation programs that lead to master's degrees are eligible for State certification.

The NYSDOL Teacher Residency Program is a specific example of a program responding to the critical teacher shortage by providing funding for NYS public school districts and/or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to create residency opportunities for graduate-level PK-12 teacher candidates. The program provides $60M in funding, through two (2) rounds, to fund master's degrees partially or fully for teacher residents enrolled in a NYSED-registered residency program.

The NYSED Career and Technical Education (CTE) Teacher Certification for Career Changers offers opportunities for individuals to transition from careers in industry to the teaching profession through its Transitional A certification process. A Transitional A certificate is issued to permit the

employment of an individual in a specific CTE title in a NYS school district or BOCES who does not meet the requirements for an Initial Teaching certificate but who possesses the requisite occupational experience. Individuals must have a commitment from a school district or BOCES to employ and mentor them while they complete specific educational coursework necessary to earn the Initial Teaching certificate.

Beginning in 2024, individuals holding a Transitional A certificate have had the opportunity to participate in the Train and Sustain pilot program offered through the NYS CTE Technical Assistance Center which supports these individuals as they pursue their Initial and Professional Teaching certification. This pilot program provides cohort-based, cost-free coaching and support in CTE pedagogy and postsecondary coursework as participants navigate the transition from industry to the classroom. The goal of this program is to support instructional competency as well as the development of collaborative and sustaining networks to promote teacher retention.

Digital Literacy

Online learning provided through NYSDOL's partnership with Coursera, as well as the implementation of the Northstar Digital Literacy program help meet the need for skill training identified by both businesses and job seekers. The Northstar Digital Literacy curriculum includes basic computer and software skills as well as more advanced learning standards to support using technology in daily life. Coursera offers a broad catalog of courses, including topics identified in the Business and Job Seeker Survey such as Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, AI, and data analysis. Some LWDBs offer access for job seekers who do not have the digital skills or resources to engage with these tools virtually via regular in-person orientation sessions on Northstar and self-paced learning labs to provide device access for job seekers along with the additional support of a dedicated staff person during these sessions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI-specific questions were introduced in the 2024 surveys.

Businesses were asked if they are implementing or considering implementing AI in the next 12-24 months:

AI Plans (Statewide)	%
Yes	16%
No	55%
Unsure	28%

Businesses were also asked if the implementation of AI would cause a reduction in their current staff count or future hiring:

AI Causing Staff Reduction (Statewide)	%
Yes	5%
No	56%
Unsure	39%

Job seekers were asked, do you believe your job or industry are at risk due to AI or automation in the next decade? Responses showed more concern from job seekers for potential disruptions due to AI: 18% believed there is a high risk, 29% believed there is a moderate risk, 26% believed there is a low risk, and 27% believed there is no risk.

Recognizing AI's transformative power, the State Workforce Investment Board has provided input for the 2025 survey questions, increasing the focus on AI. The upcoming results are expected to reflect increased awareness, use, excitement, and concerns regarding AI in the workplace.

According to the 2024 NYS Significant Industries Report by NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research, the IT industry (within NAISC code 541: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services) is projected to grow by 12.1% Statewide through 2030. Many AI-related business activities also fall under this categorization, although the rapid expansion of AI technologies can blur the distinction of industry categories.

Empire AI

Indeed, NYS is on the forefront of attracting and developing the next generation of tech talent. Through Empire AI, NYS has become an international hub for developing AI technology for the public good and for AI-powered businesses. Launched in April 2024 by Governor Hochul, Empire AI is a bold partnership of NYS's leading public and private universities coming together to establish a state-of-the-art AI computing center housed at SUNY's University at Buffalo (UB).

Empire AI gives its members access to high-performance computing power to use for responsible AI research and development. Its members include Columbia University, Cornell University, CUNY, New York University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, SUNY, and the Flatiron Institute. NYS is now the national model in responsible AI innovation, with its leading research institutions pioneering safe, equitable, and accessible AI research and development benefitting every corner of NYS.[11]

Building on this, beginning in the fall of 2025, seven (7) AI-focused degree programs are being offered at UB, preparing students for the rapidly evolving field of AI and its growing impact across various industries. Over 300 students per year are projected to enroll in the programs through 2030.[12]

One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP)

NYS is also leading the nation in new semiconductor industry investment, and Upstate NY is emerging as a global hub for Advanced Manufacturing. There is a growing demand for skilled workers to sustain that growth and the One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP) will help meet that demand while providing high quality, accessible training opportunities for priority populations.

ON-RAMP is a $200M investment to help fund and realize a network of four (4) new consortium-based Advanced Manufacturing workforce training centers in strategic, high impact locations in Upstate NY: the Capital Region, Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, and a flagship facility in Syracuse (Central).

The primary goal of ON-RAMP is to connect diverse and skilled New Yorkers with careers in dynamic, high-growth Advanced Manufacturing industries. ON-RAMP centers will provide critical academic

[11] https://www.empireai.tech/benefits
[12] https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-first-their-kind-ai-specialized-degrees-offered-university-buffalo

supports proven to increase success in high-skilled training programs. Employers will be able to leverage ON-RAMP centers to develop training programs and find talent to fit their needs.

Training provided through ON-RAMP will be based on the highly successful model developed by the Northland Workforce Development Training Center in Buffalo. Northland employs a model designed to reduce all the major barriers that prohibit students from enrolling and completing post-secondary education including transportation, childcare, academic readiness, and affordability. These centers will combine industry, academia, social services, organized labor, and community organizations to provide high quality, in-demand training and the wraparound support necessary to remove these common barriers and empower more New Yorkers with the skills needed for careers in high growth Advanced Manufacturing industries.[13]

LWDBs will collaborate with ON-RAMP to align workforce development strategies and expand access to career pathways. When feasible, ON-RAMP participants will be co-enrolled with WIOA to access work experience, career exploration, supportive services, leadership, and soft skills training, training services, case management, individualized career services, and basic career services. ON-RAMP centers will empower New Yorkers from all backgrounds with the skills needed to enter careers in NYS's rapidly growing Advanced Manufacturing ecosystem.[14]

ON-RAMP Core Principles

Commitment to Access and Equity

- Develop accessible and equitable pathways for priority populations to access training and education that lead to good jobs in Advanced Manufacturing.
- Establish a clearly articulated plan that demonstrates how access and equity will be addressed and continually evaluated for effectiveness in serving priority populations.

Development of Active Industry Partnerships

- Demonstrate industry engagement in such areas as curriculum development, training support, mentoring, career exploration, business tours, commitments to interview graduates for open positions, and active participation in ongoing programming.
- Ensure training offerings are developed with industry and are reflective of industry projections for Advanced Manufacturing job growth within the region.
- Build ongoing mechanisms for updating training based on changing industry needs.

Creation of Effective Workforce Pipelines

- Create career pathways for entry-level and mid-skill workers to access long-term sustainable employment in Advanced Manufacturing.
- Develop or enhance training programs for in-demand skills featuring direct job placement with industry partners.
- Increase the capacity of workforce training providers with a track record of results-oriented workforce training and fostering opportunities for priority populations.

[13] https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/jobs-future-governor-hochul-announces-three-new-locations-selected-200-million-ramp-program
[14] https://esd.ny.gov/on-ramp#overview

- Provide job seekers with a variety of options for training and education from several providers within the center and ensuring alignment between participant interest, industry demand, and training offerings.

Wraparound Supports for Program Participants

- Utilize innovative approaches, services, and programs that increase success in skills training by reducing barriers to participation and achievement, such as lack of access to transportation or childcare.
- Partner with local nonprofits and Community-Based Organization that assist individuals from priority populations for case management services and recruitment, with the goal of bringing new people into the labor force.
- Provide stipends to participants while they undergo short-term, non-degree bearing training in an "earn while you learn" model.

Data-Driven Performance Management

- Collect, track, and regularly report specific outcome data to evaluate achievement of program goals.
- Use data-driven decision-making to improve the overall program and approach, with multiple check-in points to assess and solve challenges and implement process improvement.

Identifying Customer Needs, Coordinating Services and Developing Individual Service Plans

A one-on-one initial assessment (also known as an interview) is typically a job seeker's first staff-assisted service. During the interview, staff considers the participant's occupational goals; existing skills and strengths, including literacy; English language proficiency; skill gaps; work search readiness; potential barriers to employment; local labor market conditions; and desire for reskilling, upskilling, or training.

A quality initial assessment provides information, like that found on a resume, to be recorded in participant case files and submitted into NYSDOL's JobZone and Virtual Career Center (VCC). Job matching and referral takes place on multiple levels, from automated VCC emails sent directly to participants, to staff making referrals during interviews at the Career Center. The VCC platform uses AI to read participant profiles and recommend jobs that match their skills and experience. Participants can opt in to receive emails with job matches, including job referrals sent by staff. NYSDOL staff can work with participants to update their profiles, review matched jobs, and visit career exploration features that are available on the platform.

Career Center staff work with all job seekers to plan the services best suited to their individual needs. Those requiring career development assistance or seeking training receive a written Individual Employment Plan that helps guide participants as they work toward their employment goals. Participants identified as having barriers to employment are provided services directly at the Career Centers by workforce experts. They may also be referred to supportive services and/or other agencies to work through barriers and receive coordinated case management services. For example, Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) staff hired under New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION) use collaborative interventions such as Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) to leverage existing WIOA partnerships to blend and braid funding and improve

outcomes. Reentry Employment Specialists, many of whom are Employment Counselors, have received training to help them address the unique needs of individuals with legal history such as understanding RAP sheets and Certificates of Rehabilitation, legal protections for those with criminal convictions in NYS, the Federal Bonding Program, and disclosing legal history during the employment process.

Agencies participating in the Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System have a shared case management system and WIOA combined enrollment process. This allows for streamlined services to participants, coordination of services, the ability to provide real time referrals, and delivery of comprehensive service to participants.

The interagency release of information form, as well as issuance of TA #19-01 and training on the use of the form provided across NYS, has better enabled the partner programs to provide timely services to common participants of the System.

Trade Act eligible individuals who access services via the Career Centers are co-enrolled in the WIOA DW Program and receive all applicable and available basic services and individualized career services. Co-enrollment allows the process of needs and skills assessment to begin immediately, even before these workers may become eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), giving them more time to consider all the options available to them. Local career planners record the co-enrollment in OSOS, and NYSDOL's State-level TAA Unit staff confirms that co-enrollment is documented in the record when approving training programs at the State level.

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) has a strong infrastructure, including 15 district offices and ten (10) satellite offices throughout NYS. In addition, counselors are available at Career Centers and schools. NYSED/ACCES-VR encourages individuals to participate in an orientation to help determine if they wish to seek service and can speed the process as eligibility requirements are clarified. A group orientation is available to best support youth applying for services. Counselors work directly with individuals to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that identifies the services and strategies necessary for achieving the employment goal. The IPE is the foundation of service for the participant. The employment goal is established based upon the individual's choice and Labor Market Information (LMI). Often, achievement of the goal requires services obtained from postsecondary educational institutions, vocational training, or contracted vendors.

In addition to contracts with service vendors, NYSED/ACCES-VR has several agreements in place with other entities, including sister State agencies like the Office of Mental Health and Office for People with Development Disabilities, to guide cooperative work. Further, under NY SCION, NYSED/ACCES-VR and Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) staff work collaboratively with DRCs to minimize duplicative services.

OCFS/NYSCB provides services to individuals who are legally blind through seven (7) district offices as well as several outstations throughout NYS. Counselors arrange to meet with an individual at a convenient location to discuss the array of services provided by OCFS/NYSCB. If the individual is interested in participating in VR services, the counselor will gather information from the individual to help determine eligibility for services. Once a determination of eligibility is made, the counselor and the individual work together to identify a vocational goal and the services required to meet that goal. The goal and planned services are documented on the IPE.

OCFS/NYSCB counselors coordinate service provision and work with participants to assess progress in meeting their objectives and goals. OCFS/NYSCB works with students, families, and school

districts to facilitate the coordination of transition services for students who are legally blind and transitioning from school to the world of adult responsibilities and work. OCFS/NYSCB recognizes these efforts are critical to enable students to achieve maximum success in employment, postsecondary education, independent living, and community participation, and is committed to being an active partner in the transition process. OCFS/NYSCB also maintains relationships with other NYS agencies involved in workforce development, including Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Health, Office of Addiction Services and Supports, and NYSDOL.

OCFS/NYSCB uses a Partnership Plus Agreement, which enables participants with a Social Security Ticket to Work (TTW) to obtain VR services from OCFS/NYSCB, as well as broad access to community providers to assist in the coordination of Social Security payments and other benefits and services.

Eleven nonprofit organizations across NYS are approved vendors to provide benefits advisement and support economic self-sufficiency. The increased access to DRCs and other Employment Networks (ENs) increases support in maintaining employment regardless of whether the individual is an active participant with any NYS workforce agency.

OCFS/NYSCB contracts with two (2) private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide pre-college programs for OCFS/NYSCB participants entering their senior year of high school. The program goal is to provide students the opportunity to refine their academic, social, and independent living skills before beginning college.

Work Experience Training services are provided to a wide range of VR services recipients. This service provides employment experiences and resume building for youth transitioning from school to employment and for adults with minimal work histories.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new pre-vocational and vocational training programs for both adults and transitioning youth. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a participant to reach their vocational goal. OCFS/NYSCB reviews curriculum for all pre-vocational programs for transition-age youth to evaluate the nature and quality of the program with the goal of providing quality programming preparing youth to enter the 21st century workforce.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with in-demand jobs where vocational training was not previously available.

OCFS/NYSCB Children's Consultants and VR Counselors (VRCs) will continue to emphasize to school district personnel the importance of integrating the Expanded Core Curriculum into standard academic instruction and routine daily tasks and encourage school staff to work closely with itinerant vision teachers and staff from local private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide comprehensive services needed by students.

OCFS/NYSCB also provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through Assistive Technology Center (ATC) contracts and private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment, and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. ATC Centers and a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide on-site needs evaluation and training for those whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

In addition, OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program, enabling them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standards.

Continuous Engagement

NYS strives to keep job-seeking participants engaged with all partners in the System until they are successful in achieving their employment goals. Continuous engagement strategies include participation in career services, individual counseling, assessments, provision of LMI, job referrals, job clubs, workshops, virtual services, and business recruitment events. NY SCION DRCs can also provide benefits advisement to social security disability beneficiaries long after they achieve their employment goals, creating a continuous, ongoing relationship that creates stability for our customers.

Continuous engagement and individualized case management allow staff to provide the necessary services to participants while giving them multiple opportunities to provide feedback, which leads to participant satisfaction. In some instances, staff are evaluated on the services provided to their participants and the use of individual level performance data to provide consistent feedback. This ensures participants receive the necessary services to help them reach their employment and training goals. In most instances, local areas offer their own feedback process to ensure feedback is captured immediately following services. However, in 2024, NYSDOL released Statewide customer satisfaction surveys to capture participant and business feedback on the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of the Career Centers and System as a whole. NYSDOL will continue to issue Statewide customer satisfaction surveys in the future to align with Career Center Certification.

Staff Development

NYS values staff training and recognizes the importance of having a strong capacity building program to train workforce staff on serving participants, providing resources, and understanding and complying with policies and procedures to meet changing workforce needs. NYSDOL staff development opportunities are offered weekly, and trainings are continuously developed to support frontline Career Center staff in providing high quality participant-centered services.

Virtual workshops have proven to be a successful way to reach New Yorkers to aid in preparing them for their job search. In addition, agency staff and partners are encouraged to attend these sessions to learn about partner services. The recordings are available to staff to refer to if unable to view the live sessions and the monthly schedule of workshops is shared amongst the group. In 2024, over 602 workshops were delivered to over 33,000 attendees. Partners plan to continue expanding the offerings and topics in the coming years.

Specialized training and technical assistance are provided to staff by RESs and DRCs, who build staff capacity to serve individuals with involvement in the criminal justice system and people with disabilities, respectively. Likewise, OCFS/NYSCB continues to provide training for staff on participant's potential eligibility for the use of Blind Work Expenses as well as other work incentives to support participant financial independence.

NYSED/ACCES-VR has a cadre of trainings available that support VRCs in their professional development. These trainings are made available through contracted vendors, conferences or through federal partners. Internal trainings on eligibility, IPE development, pre-employment

transition services, and policy and procedure updates are regularly completed by NYSED/ACCES-VR staff. Trainings that provide credential opportunities for VRCs are also shared with OCFS/NYSCB. These trainings are shared on a quarterly basis with the interagency Training and Accessibility Assistance Workgroup (TAAG) workgroup, which works to ensure all training and skill building that occurs in the System is consistent across all partner programs.

NYSDOL also partners with the TAAG workgroup to offer virtual Statewide workshops, and NYSED/ACCES, OCFS/NYSCB and OTDA regularly present workshops to job seeking New Yorkers on various quarterly training, such as:

- Assistive Technology Access and Funding – Core assistive technology concepts, device acquisition pathways, and common funding mechanisms; referral workflows to The Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Program and related resources.
- Accessibility Practices – Accessibility literacy with reference to Web Content Accessibility Guideline; practical application across documents, digital content, and service delivery.
- Resource Navigation and Referrals – IRTs, cross-agency coordination workflows, including engagement with TRAID, Independent Living Centers, and advocacy partners to streamline customer support.
- Employer Engagement and Workplace Readiness – Strategies for building partnerships, implementing accommodations, and supporting inclusive hiring and retention.
- Safety and Well-being – Considerations for job-site safety and mental health supports; guidance on when to leverage subject-matter experts for case consultation.

The Workforce Synergy Forum (described in section II.c.2.) is another training platform, bringing together NYSDOL staff, Career Center managers and frontline staff, LWDB leaders, and outside subject matter experts for monthly peer-led learning sessions on a variety of WIOA-related topics.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.D.	
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CFA	Consolidated Funding Application
CUNY	City University of New York
ESD	Empire State Development
IES	Integrated Employment Specialist
LMI	Labor Market Information
LVER	Local Veteran Employment Representative
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor

NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education-Vocational Rehabilitation
NYSERDA	New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
OTDA	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RBST	Regional Business Service Team
SUNY	State University of New York
VCC	Virtual Career Center
WDI	Workforce Development Institute
WDT	Workforce Development Training
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit

*See narrative about the 2024 Business Survey and correlating initiatives in previous section (III.a.2.D.)

Business Engagement Mission and Framework

The mission of New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) Business Engagement is to provide business customers with a competitive advantage in the labor market. This mission is executed through a holistic business-centric understanding of the customer, centered around how can we help the business versus how the business can help us.

The NYSDOL Business Engagement framework begins with referring to the customer as a "business" rather than "employer" and continues with understanding the business customer's needs relative to its health. New York State's (NYS) Business Engagement framework considers the "health" of the business when determining service strategy and service type. Understanding where a business is on a "business health" spectrum allows targeted outreach with meaningful services.

For emerging, growing, and stable businesses, Business Engagement provides tailored recruitment services, hiring and training incentives, talent pool alignment, and/or other services in the Business Services toolkit. For businesses classified as retention, those attempting to avoid layoffs during a business downturn, the Shared Work program reduces the need for layoffs by reducing staff work hours and supplementing wages with partial Unemployment Insurance benefits.

Rapid Response focuses on intensive reemployment services for any workers impacted by layoffs and closures, making the connection to resources as quickly as possible. By developing a rapport with those affected and connecting them to valuable resources such as resume development, InterviewStream, targeted job leads, and more, the Rapid Response team works to provide early intervention for successful job placement assistance.

Strategy, Goals, and Implementation of the Business Engagement Framework

The Business Engagement strategy is to continuously increase exposure within the business community and the number of businesses receiving services to advance job development. This requires setting goals that support far-reaching and sustainable engagement with the business community, deploying resources to achieve these goals, and setting metrics to measure success.

These goals include:

- Increasing visibility within the business community;
- Increasing the number of businesses listing jobs with the Virtual Career Center (VCC) and NYS Job Bank;
- Increasing the number of job seeker resumes available for search in the VCC;
- Increasing the amount and efficacy of job matching; and
- Generating positive reciprocal messaging with the business community.

The operational strategy for business-centric service delivery is to build business relationships that will generate a conduit for future services and ultimately produce job seeker placements.

The resources used to support this strategy include:

- Expanding existing lead generation methods through business intelligence from business associates, local partnerships, Dun & Bradstreet data, and current events/media; and
- Utilizing the Business Engagement staff role as account managers servicing business accounts, monitoring services received, and engaging with businesses to ensure job openings are matched to qualified candidates.

Cultivating relationships with businesses is a multi-stage process beginning with an initial step of developing business intelligence to determine specific workforce needs before contacting a business, which will evolve to meet additional business needs. Two (2) elements central to building and forging these connections are daily staff outreach goals and regional performance measures.

NYSDOL's Business Services unit continues to expand the network of businesses by requiring staff to engage five (5) businesses each day with the goal of providing a quality service. Each day, staff reviews the new job openings on the NYS Job Bank and VCC to identify which hiring businesses have not recently been serviced. This has proven to be an effective way for staff to foster positive relationships with businesses and connect job seekers to employment opportunities. Business Engagement staff connected with more than 24,000 businesses in calendar year 2024.

Daily business outreach on job leads is a concentrated effort by staff to build ongoing relationships with businesses to provide job seeking customers with a competitive advantage in obtaining employment.

Job leads are generally prioritized by the following factors:

- In-demand and quality jobs;
- Job openings that need to be filled immediately;
- Job openings that align with the Career Center talent pool; and/or
- Job openings from businesses with existing relationships.

Job orders that meet this definition are shared with Career Center staff responsible for identifying candidates and securing resumes from those who are interested. Business Engagement then advocates for customers and shares the resumes with the businesses for consideration.

This model engages the Career Center staff to take a larger role in the front-end matching process of job order fulfillment. This shift enables Business Engagement staff to function as account managers focused on building relationships with businesses to provide more intensive services, capture placement data, and to follow-up at regular intervals to ensure customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the Business Services Teams actively collaborate with the Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) for the provision of comprehensive services to veterans, eligible spouses, and the businesses that hire them. The role of the LVER is to perform job matching, referral functions, and job placement for all veterans and eligible spouses serviced by their Career Center(s). LVERs are integrated with the Business Engagement and Career Center staff to gain insight on the veteran and eligible spouse talent pools and industries they represent. Within their assigned catchment area, they will also advocate for all covered persons served and perform targeted outreach to businesses, business associations, and business groups to promote the advantages of hiring veterans to support them in finding employment.

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) has a Business Relations team that includes a Statewide Coordinator and placement and marketing representatives, known as Integrated Employment Specialists (IES), in the 15 District Offices. In addition, there is an IES 2 for each of the five (5) regions of NYS. The IES team works with businesses to create possible job opportunities for NYSED/ACCES-VR participants.

Regional Sector Based Approaches

All regions developed successful, long-standing relationships between NYSDOL and local Business Services staff. NYS sought to build on these partnerships by creating Regional Business Service Teams (RBSTs) to align services with regional strategies across all levels of the System.

TA #23-05: Regional Business Service Teams, was released in 2023, to establish NYSDOL policy regarding the composition and role of RBSTs in NYS's ten (10) labor market regions.

The RBSTs convene quarterly and seek to develop regional strategies for Business Services; share business intelligence, Labor Market Information (LMI), and information on new programs; and co-host career fairs and customized recruiting events. The RBSTs have open lines of communication that are important when navigating logistical issues due to new policy; collaborating to meet performance measures; and expanding and rolling out new initiatives, including On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs.

Each labor market region in NYS must have an RBST in place that meets quarterly and supports the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) in the region through:

- Developing strategies to respond to current demand; and
- Coordinating sector strategies to align business services within the region.

RBST membership is as follows:

1. Co-Chairs:
    a. A NYSDOL Associate Business Services Representative or Occupational Analyst; and
    b. A lead LWDB Director designated by the LWDB(s) in the region.
2. One representative from each of the additional Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) in the region, designated by each area's LWDB; and
    a. The LWDA representative can be an LWDB member and must have specific responsibility for providing services to businesses in the LWDA.
3. Representatives from the following NYS Partner Agencies:

a. Additional NYSDOL representation;
    i. The Career Center Manager for each Career Center located in the region;
    ii. The local Labor Market Analyst; and
    iii. The Commissioner's Regional Representative, if applicable.
4. Empire State Development (ESD) Regional Representative or designee;
5. NYSED;
    a. A Board of Cooperative Educational Services Superintendent from the region (outside of New York City); and
    b. A representative from either Adult Education or NYSED/ACCES-VR.
6. Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB);
7. Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), and may also incorporate local Department of Social Services; and
8. New York State Office for the Aging.

Participation by the non-NYSDOL partner agencies is not mandatory but is advised, and participation of additional community-based partners or other local organizations with an interest in business is also permitted and would be at the discretion of the regional RBST co-chairs.

To provide each region with autonomy, the co-chairs will collaborate with members of the RBST to determine the role and mission of the individual RBST. At a minimum, the RBST must support the alignment of sector strategies and strategic long-term planning. It is important to note that the RBST is intended to:

- Align business services provided at the local level with regional sector initiatives/strategies and regional LMI;
- Strengthen existing partnerships and/or business relationships that are working effectively and build upon them;
- Enhance LWDA partnerships with entities in other regions to address specific workforce needs (i.e., partnering to respond to solicitations to meet workforce needs, etc.); and
- Identify and disseminate information regarding services that will benefit businesses.

The RBST will also share and/or coordinate workforce intelligence including:

- Initiatives/strategies for stable or emerging and retracting sectors in the region;
- Relationships relevant to advancing workforce strategies in the region's sectors, including but not limited to NYS, regional, county, and local economic development entities; business associations and partnerships (i.e., Manufacturing Extension Partnerships); labor organizations; chambers of commerce; and businesses investing in economic development and/or workforce development;
- Talent pipelines and career pathway opportunities, including but not limited to pipeline development for alignment with difficult to fill occupations and engagement with State University of New York (SUNY), City University of New York (CUNY), and training providers;
- Services to business customers, including job postings, career fairs/customer recruitments, LMI, developing workforce intelligence, human resource consulting, OJT, Registered

Apprenticeship (RA), the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), as well as layoff aversion and turn around solutions (i.e., Shared Work); and

- Information using OSOS as a shared database to chronicle business contacts and services.

The work of the RBST will be coordinated through:

- Communicating RBST activities and ensuring information is delivered effectively to RBST member organizations and the Career Centers;
- Chronicling business contacts and services through a shared case management process in OSOS;
- Providing relevance to WIOA planning through strategic sector-based partnerships among business intermediaries, government, educational institutions, training providers, economic developers, and labor and community organizations; and
- Aligning business services with regional sector initiatives/strategies and LMI to support the demands of businesses and workforce development.

The co-chairs and other members of the RBST are responsible for developing and implementing operating guidelines to support the effectiveness of the RSBT. Accountability will be accomplished by:

- Completing and submitting quarterly progress reports to NYSDOL by the 15th day of the month following the end of each quarter;
- Establishing a schedule of planned quarterly meetings, including structured agendas, to ensure regular meetings are convened that reflect current regional initiatives, grants, primary industries, and demand occupations;
- Facilitating consensus-based decision making among RBST members; and
- Communicating RBST activities with LWDBs and Career Center Managers.

Competitive Advantage Assets

NYSDOL Business Engagement deploys several services and a network of partnerships to enable businesses to meet their needs. Eight (8) key Business Engagement assets provide a competitive advantage in the labor market to Career Center business customers:

1. Interagency Collaboration;
2. The VCC and NYS Job Bank;
3. Customized Recruiting Assistance;
4. Career Fairs;
5. OJT;
6. Incumbent Worker Training;
7. Tax Credits; and
8. Ensuring Business Integrity.

Business Engagement has a network of partnerships used to attract businesses, develop funding opportunities, and create talent pipelines. This includes collaboration with NYS agencies including NYSED/ACCES-VR, ESD, OTDA, and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), SUNY, and CUNY.

The mission of Business Engagement is aligned with the ESD goal of encouraging job creation and economic opportunities. Accordingly, Business Engagement collaborates with ESD to provide information and services to businesses considering developing new sites in NYS.

Business Engagement promotes and connects job seekers to the NYSERDA-funded Energy Efficiency and Clean Technology OJT program. It also partners with higher education on multiple levels, including utilizing colleges, universities, and training providers as strategic partners for regional growth; referral sources for qualified job seekers; and business customers when they need to fill job openings.

Business Services works closely with many high-profile businesses on large projects of significant jobs impacts and develops customized plans of service. These include coordinating with the business to create a customized recruitment plan and application process, followed by matching, referring and/or assessing qualified candidates in our talent bank or the job seeking public.

Business Engagement saw a need and developed the capacity to hold virtual career fairs that are responsive to the current, emerging needs of businesses to move more of their recruitment efforts to a virtual online platform. *From late 2020 to 2024, 380 virtual events have been held serving more than 16,933 businesses; 135,952 job seekers; and representing over 731,976 job openings.

*Includes customers participating in multiple events.

Staff support events with weekly business trainings and workshops for jobseekers to ensure both businesses and jobseekers can successfully navigate the platform. Exhibitor and jobseeker guides were also developed as a handy reference for participants.

Virtual career fairs can be targeted to specific industries or initiatives. Some examples include:

- HELP Virtual Career Fair (partnered with Civil Service);
- I LOVE NY Tourism Industry (partnered with ESD on downstate, upstate and Statewide Virtual Events);
- Information Technology Industry (to address the impacts of the job loss in the IT Industry);
- Professional Career Opportunities (partnered with NYS Department of Civil Service);
- Statewide Advanced Manufacturing;
- NYS Department of Transportation;
- Opportunities in State Government;
- NYSERDA Offshore Wind; and
- Syracuse University Virtual Career Fair.

In 2024, NYSDOL sponsored or co-sponsored over 241 in-person job fairs and over 140 recruitment events serving over 1,945 unique businesses and 7,765 unique job seekers. Events included mini job fairs which were held in local Career Centers. Some examples of the in-person events held in 2024 include:

- 24th Annual Dr. King Annual Career Fair;
- DREAM Career Fair;
- Yonkers Civil Service Job Fair;
- North of I-81 Local Hiring Event; and
- Central Brooklyn Job Fair.

The NYS Job Bank provides a great value to business customers, allowing them the opportunity to post jobs at no cost and save thousands of dollars a year in fees from Internet job boards and print media. Businesses have several options of how to post jobs:

- Send job listings directly to Business Engagement to be posted;
- Post jobs themselves manually; or
- "Index" jobs directly from their own corporate websites, whereby all jobs that are posted on the business site are automatically uploaded to the NYS Job Bank. This method provides the convenience of entering the job only once, with any changes to the job order on the corporate site also reflected in the posting on the Job Bank.

There are currently more than 171,000 jobs from more than 6,285 businesses on the NYS Job Bank, and there are approximately 42,512 visitors to the Job Bank each month.

Microsites are a subset of the NYS Job Bank. These sites address the needs of seasonal and part-time employment and have now expanded to help with other immediate and critical opportunities in Tourism and Child Care. Businesses post positions on the NYS Job Bank as they normally would and those jobs that fit niche categories and/or have keywords in them will also appear in the microsite. There are currently four (4) microsites:

1. Seasonal Jobs;
2. Child Care Opportunities;
3. Tourism Industry; and
4. Part-Time Jobs.

Adding to our available self-service tools for businesses, the VCC is a job posting and talent sourcing platform using advanced AI to connect businesses to candidates. This new and improved platform gives businesses and job seekers the ability to communicate throughout the hiring process. The VCC streamlines talent acquisition with one (1) platform from source to select, with everything from job calibration, candidate matching, screening, assessment, communications, and offer tracking.

In addition to OJTs, the NYSDOL Workforce Development Training (WDT) Employee Retention and Advancement Training (ERAT) Program has become a principal tool to make connections between businesses and job seekers.

Building on the eight-year success of the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) for economic development, the CFA Workforce Development Initiative (WDI) was established in 2019 to support strategic regional efforts that met businesses' short-term workforce needs, improved regional talent pipelines, expanded RAs, and addressed the long-term needs of expanding industries. These investment strategies focused on emerging fields such as clean energy, health technology, and computer science. NYSDOL participated in three (3) rounds of this initiative until it was fully phased out in June 2023. The existing NYSDOL programs that fell under WDI continue to be administered outside of the CFA WDI process. NYSDOL's WDT programs, released in early 2024, focus on incumbent workers (ERAT), unemployed/underemployed worker training (Reemployment Training Grant, or RTG), and Work Readiness Training (WRT). Funding available under this strategy also supports efforts to improve the economic security of women, youth, and other populations that face significant barriers to career advancement.

NYSDOL and local area staff promote these programs interchangeably. All staff is active in business and participant identification, development of training plans, and monitoring of contracts.

Business Engagement staff promote tax credits to all businesses to incentivize hiring certain eligible populations, including:

- WOTC, a key tool in the Business Services toolkit, is a federal tax credit available to businesses that hire individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Businesses can receive a credit ranging from $1,200 to $9,600 for hiring qualified individuals;
- The Hire-a-Veteran Tax Credit encourages businesses to hire post-9/11 veterans who have not been employed full-time (35 or more hours/week) for at least 365 days. A business can receive up to $15,000 by hiring and retaining an eligible veteran or $20,000 if the veteran is disabled. The credit may be claimed for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2015, but before January 1, 2026;
- The New York Youth Jobs Program (NYYJP), formally Urban Youth Jobs Program and New York Youth Works, is currently active and widely promoted to encourage businesses to hire unemployed, disadvantaged youth, 16 to 24 years of age, who reside in NYS with an emphasis on 13 specific targeted areas in eight (8) regions of NYS. Businesses utilizing this program can earn up to $7,500 in tax credits. The NYYJP has helped 4,835 NYS businesses place youth participants in 353,803 jobs; and
- The Federal Bonding Program is a hiring incentive that provides a fidelity bond to businesses that hire individuals from a variety of job-seeker groups, including those with involvement in the criminal justice system.

Business Engagement employs multiple methods to capture placement data, which include leveraging relationships that provide a flow-through of placement information from business customers as well as accessing data from New Hire Reports. Business Engagement works closely with NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy, and Research to retrieve data from these Reports and identify candidates from OSOS who attained employment with business customers. Capturing supplemental placement data outside of direct relationships with businesses provides another way to assess how many placements occur and which strategies produce the greatest success.

The initiatives previously mentioned (e.g., business outreach, priority jobs, and customized recruitment) build solid and trustworthy relationships with businesses that naturally lead to the sharing of placement data. Through these initiatives, staff provides the quality service that serves as the foundation of strong relationships and open dialogue, which are then leveraged to glean hiring information.

Last, monitoring staff activities plays a large role in the success of Business Engagement operations by ensuring staff provides quality services and document their activities. Outreach to businesses is tracked on a weekly basis to capture data and report on the daily outreach activities, services, and number of businesses served by Business Engagement staff across NYS. This is done through multiple reports and sent to supervisors and staff, so individuals are held to standards for outreach goals and the quality of their work. Data is compiled and analyzed by staff, region, industry sector, type of outreach, and services offered.

Like NYSDOL, OCFS/NYSCB and NYSED/ACCES-VR offer workforce development services to businesses, monitor the activities of business outreach staff, and provide linkages between

businesses and job seekers. Both agencies enter business engagement activities directly into NYSDOL's OSOS case management system.

Across NYS, OCFS/NYSCB staff conduct outreach in their respective territories to develop a network of local businesses, establishing working relationships to identify business needs and potential employees. District Offices developed a running list of business networks where communication is ongoing, and counselors are contacted by local businesses regarding matching individual skills with employment needs. Outreach was also accomplished through collaboration with partner agencies.

OCFS/NYSCB monitors contract compliance with comprehensive services contracts, vocational evaluation/job placement services contracts, and assistive technology services contracts through a centralized Quality Assurance process. Each contractor is evaluated at least once during the contract period through an internal review of randomly selected participant cases. The review evaluates the contractor's adherence to contract guidelines and the quality of services delivered. The review team includes staff from OCFS/NYSCB home office and district offices. A final report is submitted to the contractor, and additional follow-up monitoring is conducted if corrective actions are needed.

In addition, on-going monitoring of eligibility, plan development, services provision, and case closure takes place through checks built into the OCFS/NYSCB participant caseload management system and through supervisory review of participant cases.

NYSED/ACCES-VR has a Business Relations team that includes a Statewide Coordinator and placement and marketing representatives, known as Integrated Employment Specialists (IES), in the 15 District Offices. In addition, there is an IES 2 for each of the five (5) NYSED/ACCES-VR regions of NYS. The IES team works with businesses to create possible job opportunities for NYSED/ACCES-VR participants.

NYSED/ACCES-VR's Business Engagement team works directly with businesses to understand their employment needs and find candidates who are appropriate matches. Active employer partnerships include CVS, Amazon, Kodak, Queens Botanical Garden, Microsoft, Price Chopper, Home Depot, Lowes, and Optimax. Team members also work closely with job seekers, discovering their skills and placing them in OJTs, paid internships, and work tryouts, when feasible. Team members help with accommodations, financial incentives, worker retention, accessibility, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and diversity training. They provide publications about hiring people with disabilities, sponsor Disability Mentoring Day events, and celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) by giving awards to businesses that are committed to hiring people with disabilities in their communities. Staff attend business-related events, including job fairs, to provide information about NYSED/ACCES-VR services to businesses and to link specific job applicants to business needs. In addition to the business relations team, NYSED/ACCES-VR provides job coaches, who work with the business and the employee to understand the needs of both to support success. Business engagement activities are documented and recorded by NYSED/ACCES-VR staff directly into NYSDOL's OSOS system.

Additional partner collaborations are ongoing with NYSDOL and OCFS/NYSCB to present a monthly virtual workshop on Worker Retention Services for Job Seekers with Disabilities. Likewise, NYSED/ACCES-VR staff partner with NYSDOL DRCs. Members of the NY SCION IRTs help job seekers coordinate services and opportunities from different government and community-based organizations and NYSED/ACCES-VR staff participate in community events (i.e., community job fairs, reverse job fairs, community resource conferences, HR consortium, and several local business engagement events/activities). The team provides consultation to NYSDOL staff on the ADA,

reasonable accommodations, and accessibility (including web accessibility), all NYSED/ACCES services.

OTDA's role with the Business Engagement Workgroup involves assisting local districts in coordinating with service providers and providing training and technical assistance to workgroup members. OTDA Employment Services Advisors attend the quarterly RBST meetings with representatives of their assigned districts' Employment units to discuss workforce development strategies that will serve public assistance recipients. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, OTDA organized a series of task force meetings that brought together district employment units and local businesses in the Broome, Chemung, and Onondaga program areas with the goal of expanding career services to specialized community locations. The agency plans to look into restarting this initiative and trying it in other areas now that the Business Engagement Workgroup has resumed its regular operations.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.E.	
ATTAIN	Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking
CRWDB	Capital Region Workforce Development Board
CUNY	City University of New York
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of State Workforce Development
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
HVCC	Hudson Valley Community College
ITA	Individual Training Account
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
OTDA	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
SUNY	State University of New York
SYEP	Summer Youth Employment Program
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
YEP	Youth Employment Program

Job-driven education and training programs are the foundation of a robust workforce development system. In New York State (NYS), a wide range of curricula and attendance options are delivered through the secondary and postsecondary education systems and certificate training programs. Career Centers directly link to education and training programs that create career pathway opportunities, provide necessary support that gives participants the tools they need to succeed, and connect employers with trained job seekers.

Connecting individuals with degree and non-degree educational opportunities, credentials, and Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs is a priority in NYS, and there are multiple pathways within the System to ensure full access and participation for all youth and adults.

State University of New York (SUNY)

The State University of New York (SUNY) is one of the country's largest comprehensive systems of public higher education. It serves 1.3M students in credit bearing courses and programs, and through workforce development and continuing education and community outreach programs across 64 campuses. These include research universities, academic medical centers, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, colleges of technology, and an online learning network. The annual economic impact of SUNY to NYS is $26.8B.

SUNY Chancellor John B. King has set a goal that every SUNY undergraduate student take part in an internship or other experiential learning program tied to High-Impact Practices (HIPs). These HIP metrics include:

- Internship (paid or for-credit);
- Clinical placement or practicum;
- Capstone course projects;
- Service-learning and community-based learning, including civic engagement;
- Undergraduate research, including field study; and
- Study abroad.

According to a recent report from the Strada Education Network, students who have just one internship in college are 50% less likely to be underemployed after graduation than peers who did not have internships.

To achieve this goal, SUNY has implemented and expanded various programs and initiatives, including:

- Chancellor's Summer Research Excellence Fund – Provides paid internships and research opportunities for undergraduate students across various SUNY campuses;
- Empire State Service Corps – Helps students complete experiential learning opportunities;
- Veterans Enrollment and Support Internship Program – Offers internships specifically for veteran students;
- SUNY Climate Corps – Connects students with paid internships focused on climate action and sustainability within NYS agencies; and
- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Career Development Internship Program – Aims to close the internship gap for EOP students by providing them with opportunities to intern with State agencies.

These efforts are supported by increased State funding and a focus on connecting academic learning with practical experience to enhance student engagement and improve post-graduation employment outcomes.

The Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) program is a partnership between SUNY and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), serving some of NYS's most economically challenged communities. ATTAIN utilizes state-of-the-art technology to improve

the user's academic and employability skills in an increasingly demanding technological world. There are currently 31 ATTAIN labs throughout NYS working with WIOA partners, including New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and New York State Education Department , to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-eligible individuals, public assistance recipients (or those within the 200% of federal poverty designation), Dislocated Workers, individuals receiving unemployment benefits, Out-of-School Youth, and Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) participants with Microsoft Office training and other associated certifications. OTDA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development to support the program's TANF-eligible participants with TANF funding.

City University of New York (CUNY)

City University of New York's (CUNY's) 25 campuses have become a nationally recognized engine of upward economic and social mobility. Serving roughly 400,000 students through degree and non-degree programs across the five (5) boroughs, CUNY propels more low-income students into the middle class than all Ivy League colleges, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, Duke, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) combined.

Recognizing a responsibility to propel even more CUNY graduates towards professional success through deliberate connections to career paths, Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez has mobilized CUNY to elevate the career success of graduates as a top priority. CUNY's 2023-2030 Strategic Roadmap, CUNY Lifting New York, lays out a bold vision for preparing and proactively connecting students to career paths of their choosing. CUNY has set a goal that by 2030, 100% of Bachelors and Applied Associates of Science undergraduates will graduate with a job offer or be actively pursuing advanced degrees, and 80% of those with a job offer will remain employed within one (1) year. CUNY additionally aims to triple the percent of students participating in paid work-based-learning opportunities and grow the number of employers actively recruiting on CUNY campuses from 10% to 30% by 2030.

This work is driven by the principle of meeting students where they are through flexible programs including industry-aligned workforce programs focused on in-demand skills that are offered through CUNY's Adult and Continuing Education departments. In partnership with NYS and the New York City Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), CUNY schools have leveraged WIOA funds to create seamless pathways to careers in nursing, technology, and culinary arts fields, among others. CUNY also provides related instruction for some NYSDOL RA programs, including in locally relevant fields like Maritime Technology at Kingsborough Community College.

To increase access to programs for adult learners, Governor Hochul has signed legislation to make community college free to New Yorkers aged 25 to 55 who do not already have a degree and want to pursue an associate degree in select high-demand fields. This new initiative, called Reconnect NY, will give qualified adult New Yorkers a chance to pursue a college education free of charge. To qualify for this incredible opportunity, students must pursue a degree in a high-need workforce sector, such as:

- Advanced Manufacturing;
- Artificial Intelligence;
- Cybersecurity;
- Engineering;
- Green and Renewable Energy;
- Nursing and Health Professions;

- Pathways to Teaching; and
- Technology.

This represents an opportunity for a second chance at a stronger future, while addressing sectors that are in the greatest need for an influx of new, enthusiastic workers. Reconnect NY is available at both SUNY and CUNY.

NYSDOL is currently working to embed Employment Counselors at select SUNY and CUNY campuses while aligning with Educational Opportunity Centers to ensure students have access to NYSDOL services and NYSDOL is aware of programs offered through local campuses. NYSDOL is also working to align services and tools with those being offered on public college campuses across NYS, and both SUNY and CUNY serve NYSDOL job seekers. Providing WIOA funding for many of these students has been invaluable to ensure all students have access to higher education. Further, SUNY has some non-credit courses on Coursera and CUNY has worked with NYSDOL on the Coursera rollout as part of its learning pathways program.

The Capital Region Workforce Development Board (CRWDB) has partnered with SUNY Schenectady County Community College (SCCC) on multiple business-driven initiatives that align educational pathways with career pathways, including the development of RAs in Craft Brewing and Distilling, microcredentials in Supply Chain Management, and WIOA Individual Training Account (ITA) funding in Health Care tracks. Additionally, the CRWDB partnered with SUNY Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) in Fall 2022 to open the CRWDB-sponsored Rensselaer County Workforce Development Center, an affiliate American Job Center on the HVCC Campus. The Center serves both the public as well as current and future HVCC students, further connecting business' needs and advanced training. The Center offers an array of services, including on-site recruiters, customized career planning, real-time labor market connections with businesses, resume development assistance, career search workshops, short-term training, and is staffed by WIOA Title I workforce advisors from Rensselaer County. The Center's presence on campus has proven successful with:

- Connecting HVCC students to WIOA-funded ITAs for demand occupations;
- Administering the Rensselaer County SYEP on campus giving the opportunity for disconnected youth to see an educational pathway for themselves they may not otherwise have;
- Partnering with the HVCC Center for Careers and Transfer to bring businesses and industry, including LWDB members, to the campus community; and
- Providing avenues for WIOA-enrolled In-School Youth and Out-of-School Youth to connect on campus with both credit and non-credit programs at the Center.

Leveraging Resources to Enhance Access to Workforce Development Programs

NYS strategically invests and leverages the resources of the multiple federally funded programs delivered through the System by adopting a shared vision and collaboration of all State and local partners, including the Governor and Local Chief Elected Officials, the State Workforce Investment Board, LWDBs, educational institutions, and the Career Centers.

More defined strategies for leveraging resources include:

- A formal commitment to leveraging resources by all required System partners via the local MOU process;

- Utilizing a portion of WIOA Statewide activities funds for educational and training purposes;
- Collaborating with Regional Economic Development Councils to prioritize and allocate funding opportunities for educational and training purposes;
- Using team-based approaches to serve customers with multiple barriers to employment, such as the IRTs demonstrated under multiple rounds of Disability Employment Initiative and Disability Program Navigator projects and required as part of the New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network program. This approach brings together public and private sector representatives at the local community level to improve communication and collaboration that results in enhanced coordination of services, supports, and funding to increase educational and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities;
- Applying for all applicable federal educational and training funding opportunities;
- Developing effective career pathways and sector partnership strategies that encourage all partners (e.g., businesses, workforce system, educational entities, etc.) to commit to a certain level of resources, including an allocation for education and/or training for active participants;
- Working with the SUNY and CUNY systems to better support matriculated and non-matriculated/non-degree programs and encourage workforce credentials in high-demand fields;
- Collaborating with Empire State Development's Reimagine Workforce Centers and Entrepreneurial Assistance Centers, located at various NYS community colleges and nonprofits. The entrepreneurial training programs and mentorship services assist customers who want to start a new business or grow their business; and
- New program development and related goals to support the growth of SUNY microcredentials, particularly geared toward adult learners in regional and State priority industries, which are expounded on in section III.a.2.F.

As outlined in Empire State Development's Office of State Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD's) 2025 Annual Report, NYS also leverages additional State funding to further enhance workforce development programs at these colleges and universities. ESD/OSWD'S Expanding Opportunities for SUNY and CUNY Students initiative is a $35M investment. SUNY and CUNY colleges play an integral role in ensuring that their graduates can compete for in-demand jobs and have the requisite skills to succeed from the beginning of their careers. To this end, both university systems have increased their investment in apprenticeship and internship programs, through which SUNY and CUNY students can apply their classroom learnings in real-world settings – a strategy that boosts job placements.[15]

Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)

NYS regularly provides guidance and technical assistance to in-state and out-of-state training providers who apply to be listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Prospective Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) are connected with their respective LWDB and Career Centers to align training programs with local workforce development initiatives and in-demand occupations/industries identified in the LWDBs' local plans, and to meet the requirements for Initial and Continued Eligibility on the ETPL. NYS works closely with LWDBs to facilitate proficiency with the ETPL, ensuring it is leveraged to provide access to training programs offered Statewide and across the country. NYS also assists RA sponsors in listing their programs on the ETPL.

[15] https://esd.ny.gov/esd-media-center/reports/office-strategic-workforce-development-annual-report-2025

F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.F.	
ABD	Apprenticeship Business Developer
CUNY	City University of New York
DW	Dislocated Worker
ESF-RWP	Education Stabilization Fund-Reimagine Workforce Preparation
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RI	Related Instruction
SUNY	State University of New York
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Access to, and attainment of, postsecondary and industry-recognized credentials is an integral step in helping job seeking customers obtain middle-skill employment that pays family sustaining wages. This creates a skilled workforce that meets the needs of business customers and helps New York State (NYS) attract and retain businesses. NYS's demand-driven sector partnership strategy aligns the needs of business, education, and job seekers to ensure the correct mix of training and credential programs are available.

To partially address the increased re-skilling and upskilling needs that resulted from the pandemic, National Dislocated Worker Grant funds were used for the Coursera online learning contract. The licenses from this partnership have enhanced access to online training and credentials for eligible Dislocated Workers (DWs). To ensure continuity of service beyond the grant period, the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) has expanded eligibility through 2026 to include participants who may not have been eligible under the original contract, including DWs whose unemployment is not related to COVID-19, Trade Adjustment Assistance program participants, long-term or underemployed individuals, and WIOA youth program participants.

As a large State with a diverse economy, there is a no one-size-fits-all approach to training that meets the needs of the NYS workforce. With the Education Stabilization Fund-Reimagine Workforce Preparation (ESF-RWP) grant, NYSDOL and its agency partners created, developed, implemented, and scaled short-term educational programs, training courses, and/or career pathways programs, including those focused on facilitating and strengthening entrepreneurship and small business ownership. These short-term programs must lead to certificates, badges, microcredentials, licenses, or other workplace-relevant credentials that respond to the needs of businesses or facilitate entrepreneurship. The target population for the short-term training programs include DWs seeking gainful employment; new workers looking to enter jobs within in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as identified at the national, State, or local level); unemployed or underemployed workers transitioning to new fields; and small business owners who need skills to create new businesses or grow current businesses and become more resilient. All short-term program credentials earned as a result of funding under the ESF-RWP grant are to be publicly accessible using

the Credential Engine credential registry. Such information must include the industry sector for or by which the credential was developed, the entities involved in the development of the credential, the competencies or skills assessed in awarding the credential, the form of assessment used to verify an individual's eligibility to be awarded the credential, and the body engaged in overseeing the awarding of such credentials.

Priority for Individual Training Account funds for Out-of-School Youth and adults is provided to training resulting in an industry-recognized credential. State-issued solicitations for training projects award additional technical merit points to those that offer training leading to industry-recognized credentials in the demand industries. NYS's strategic vision extends to the development of a middle-skills employment program designed specifically to support the hiring needs of business that employ individuals in titles that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.

NYS's strategy for improving access to credentials is exemplified by the Regional Economic Development Council's identification and creation of demand industry lists. These regional lists are the foundation for determining which credential training programs to offer, the establishment of Statewide and local area demand industries, and creation of industry partnerships.

Actionable Labor Market Information is the core of any effective sector partnership strategy. Combining the resources of the key economic development, workforce development, and education entities in NYS ensures that the goals of our essential partners are aligned and that appropriate credential training programs are developed to meet projected needs of businesses and available to job seekers.

Local Workforce Development Boards understand the needs of local and regional in-demand industries best, and they are in a strong position to review and determine non-degree credentials. In 2025 NYSDOL issued TA #25-01 to put this authority in their hands and provide guidance related to determining non-degree credentials for the WIOA Credential Attainment Primary Indicator of Performance for WIOA Title I Adult, DW, and Youth programs, including program quality, which is an essential component of credentials.

Registered Apprenticeships (RA) is a time-honored approach to training skilled workers through a combination of On-the-Job Training and Related Instruction (RI) and is used to develop tomorrow's competitive workforce. New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) and NYSDOL collaborate on this instruction, with NYSED/ACCES-AEPP approving the classroom RI curriculum and NYSDOL approving the actual RA. In Program Year 2024, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP approved 134 RI in support of new apprenticeship programs in NYS. Apprentices earn wages and produce high-quality work while learning skills that enhance their employability. An apprentice operates under the close supervision of an accomplished worker (journey worker) on the job and simultaneously takes RI, often at night or on weekends. A graduated pay scale assures that salary reflects the degree of skill achieved.

NYS's RA program is aligned with WIOA and Wagner-Peyser within NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development Apprenticeship and Infrastructure office. The alignment of these programs ensures that DWs and unemployed individuals are exposed to current RA opportunities, educated on the increasing role of RA in the workforce, and are encouraged to apply for RA opportunities through job fairs and Career Centers. Many RA program sponsors recruit publicly through their local Career Centers for new apprentices. In addition, sponsors that elect to conduct area-wide recruitments are required to submit their recruitment information to NYSDOL. A press release is developed for each

area-wide recruitment and is distributed to local media. Additionally, it is posted on NYSDOL's website, and the positions are listed on the NYS Job Bank.

Upon successful completion of a RA program, NYSDOL awards the apprentice with a Certificate of Completion. Each certificate is a nationally recognized portable credential. Recently, more RA sponsors are aligning the educational component of their programs with curricula at educational institutions. This builds on the current required RI and gives apprentices an opportunity to earn an educational degree along with the portable credential. Some RA program sponsors do this by combining the standard on-the-job skill component of training with expanded classroom instruction in a particular field. This classroom training is offered at State University of New York (SUNY) colleges throughout NYS. As a result, apprentices earn both a Certificate of Completion from NYSDOL and the ability to earn a certificate, associate's, or bachelor's degree from a SUNY college.

NYSDOL works closely with SUNY to promote the expansion of RA in NYS by coordinating events including industry roundtables, and by offering RI at SUNY colleges Statewide. Sponsors of NYS RA programs can utilize the NYSED-approved curriculum offered by SUNY campuses for the RI component of the RA program and apprentices can take classes toward their RA credential while earning college credits. In addition to providing classroom instruction, SUNY further provides financial support to cover the cost of that instruction up to $8,000 per registered apprentice. Forty-four SUNY campuses are involved with the SUNY Apprenticeship program and NYSDOL and SUNY have presented together across NYS and nationally on the robust partnership.

SUNY's Apprenticeship Business Developers (ABDs) support the growth of RA programs across sectors particularly in business, technology, education, health care, agriculture, and advanced manufacturing. Their roles blend business development with RA program promotion, ensuring all key stakeholders from NYSDOL and SUNY institutions are at the table with the goal to develop a RA program that breeds a successful pipeline for tomorrow's workforce. ABDs are located strategically in NYS to ensure employers have the necessary support when pursuing RA as a workforce development tool.

As SUNY microcredentials are developed with industry partners and responsive to NYS's priority industries, there are multiple areas for partnership under the Combined State Plan:

- Consistent WIOA funding for microcredential obtainment, since funding for those seeking workforce development education and training is extremely limited;
- Addition of SUNY microcredentials to the VCC to provide further options to earn necessary skills;
- Creation of new microcredentials to meet emerging needs; and
- Connecting the required educational training in RAs to credit-bearing microcredentials, providing earners with multiple pathways to succeed.

The City University of New York (CUNY) Upskilling Initiative under ESF-RWP similarly offers New York City residents short-term skill and competency-based trainings which yield credentials for in-demand transformation sectors such as Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, Advanced Logistics/Supply Chain, Digital Marketing and Communications, and Software Development. To date, over 30,000 students have successfully accessed low- or no-cost programs to accelerate their career advancement. Since inception, this program expanded to include support for the development of credit bearing credentials and dedicated employer engagement supports to ensure Upskilling is a successful pathway to a job or a degree.

CUNY and SUNY will provide participants who successfully complete a training program with a credential that is recognized and respected by industry employers. All credentials earned will be uploaded into the reputable Credential Engine Registry for full transparency.

As SUNY microcredentials provide both immediate workplace value and a pathway to a degree, growth of these short-term academic credentials offers ideal pathways for adult learners to enter or return to higher education. Microcredential earners can gain immediate employment or advancement and continue their education through flexible, manageable microcredentials. Notably, SUNY has integrated microcredentials across every sector of the University system, offering a wide range of introductory, intermediate, and advanced credentials to support the needs of New Yorkers and NYS industry.

In addition, SUNY's microcredential program provides a community-based, short-term credential program where learners have access to faculty, tutoring, and other academic supports and earn academic credits toward a degree.

To help fund access to postsecondary credentials, in February 2024, NYS approved a new category of part-time Tuition Assistance Program – Part B for students enrolled in certain non-credit workforce credential programs leading to employment or advancement of a student in a significant industry (as identified by NYSDOL) through certain SUNY or CUNY institutions. This helps address the lack of financial aid available for non-credit workforce training. However, this funding will be limited and selective, continuing to require strong partnerships and braided funding to support students in non-credit and microcredential programs, including WIOA and other State and local grant opportunities. Notably, as new grant programs are rolled out, when possible, SUNY is including programs for comprehensive student supports including academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, and other supports like transportation, childcare, and food security.

Stakeholders are currently working to develop a rollout plan for Workforce Pell in NYS, opening Pell grants for high-quality, short-term, career-focused training programs, beginning in 2026.

G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

Acronym List for Section III.a.2.G.	
ESD	Empire State Development
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
ON-RAMP	One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
REDC	Regional Economic Development Council
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs)

Since 2010, New York State (NYS) has operated under the regional planning model of community-based, performance-driven economic development that empowers localities to develop and invest

in their own economic future. Each year, Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) are required to develop an annual strategic regional plan to capitalize on the established strengths and unique resources of each of the ten (10) regions of NYS.

In line with the needs identified in the Business and Job Seeker surveys, a majority of the REDC strategic plans cite the pressing need to align worker supply with worker demand, as well as addressing workforce shortages, childcare accessibility, concerns about skill gaps, and a need for extensive training.

NYS agencies are charged with providing support to the REDCs in three (3) main ways:

1. Identifying existing funding and resources to support the implementation of the strategic plans;
2. Working with REDCs to address obstacles to long-term economic growth Statewide; and
3. Revising State guidelines and internal processes to expedite REDC projects across NYS government.

REDC strategic plans are comprehensive and address needs in a holistic fashion. Accordingly, Empire State Development (ESD) serves as the lead agency managing the REDCs. ESD Regional Directors act as the Executive Directors of each REDC, and regional ESD offices provide administrative and research support. NYS agencies, authorities, and departments are active participants working with the REDCs and provide necessary resources. In addition, educational institutions, think tanks, and other independent organizations are invited by the REDCs, as appropriate, to contribute to the development of the strategic plans.

The New York State Department of Labor has long encouraged Regional Planning to further inform and enhance the strategic plans developed by the REDCs. Regional Planning is a required function of the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) under WIOA, and must address the following:

- Regional Service Strategies, including cooperative service delivery agreements;
- Sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
- The collection and analysis of regional labor market data;
- The establishment of a regional spending plan that includes administrative cost arrangements between LWDBs and the pooling of funds where applicable;
- The coordination of supportive services;
- The coordination of services with economic development partners; and
- An agreement concerning performance accountability measure negotiation and reporting.

Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD)

Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD) seeks to be a critical link between workforce and economic development programs, with a guiding mission to meet the needs and priorities of employers and workers to ensure that New Yorkers have the skills needed to power NYS's economic growth and their own prosperity.

Since formally launching in October 2022, ESD/OSWD has begun to lay the foundation for a new approach to workforce development. ESD/OSWD's combined awards total over $63M to 77 workforce development projects across NYS which will train more than 14,000 New Yorkers. This

investment represents a decisive shift toward a NYS workforce development strategy that is laser-focused on connecting New Yorkers to quality, in-demand jobs in NYS's fastest-growing industries:

- Advanced Manufacturing and Materials;
- Biotech and Life Sciences;
- Cleantech and Renewable Energy;
- Construction;
- Electronics and Optics, Photonics, and Imaging;
- Film and TV Production and Post-Production; and
- Software and Digital Media.

These seven (7) industries have played a major role in driving NYS's economic growth over the past decade and have a significant number of "accessible jobs." Sixty percent (60%) of the jobs in these industries provide living wages and do not require a bachelor's degree.

ESD/OSWD has developed a new metrics reporting framework to better track outcomes and prioritize investment in effective workforce models. This robust set of metrics will evaluate the impact of ESD/OSWD's grantmaking, including job placement, wages before and after program participation, hiring barriers faced, and supportive services utilized. Grantees are required to collect and report data at regular intervals throughout the grant period, and all data is stored and tracked through a new dashboard within the OSOS, the same case management system used by NYSDOL and other NYS agencies. Using this existing tool helps to standardize Statewide tracking and makes it easier to evaluate outcomes across Statewide programs. ESD/OSWD continues to work closely with sister agencies to align metrics and grant reporting across programs through OSOS.

ESD/OSWD will continue to focus on three (3) core functions that are designed to drive tangible impact, share insights, and improve data and collaboration across the workforce system:

1. Drive innovative, high-impact workforce programming by launching and scaling effective and innovative programs, and leveraging program data to inform future programs and partnerships;
2. Establish strategic priorities for workforce investment by prioritizing workforce investment to align the needs of workers and employers, and ensure programs serve New Yorkers that are most in need; and
3. Connect the dots across regions, industries, and agencies by improving coordination and facilitating collective learning and agenda-setting within the workforce development ecosystem.

The success of Governor Hochul's historic investment in this program depends on partnership and collaboration from numerous parties – employers and industries, workers and unions, workforce development providers and advocates, academic and philanthropic institutions, regional partners, and government agencies. ESD/OSWD is committed to partnering with all stakeholders to advance its mission and have a transformative impact on NYS's workforce ecosystem.

ESD/OSWD is also in the early stages of standing up One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP), the Governor Hochul's initiative to create community-driven workforce training centers in four (4) areas throughout NYS (Capital Region, Mohawk Valley, Central New York, and the Finger Lakes). This program is described in depth in Sections III.a.2.C and III.a.2.D of this Plan.

b. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II Strategic Elements. This includes—

1. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE-MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.)

Acronym List for Section III.b.1.	
ASISTS	Adult Student Information System and Technical Support
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development
LMI	Labor Market Information
NYS	New York State
NYS OPWDD	New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSOFA	New York State Office for the Aging
OASAS	Office of Addiction Services and Supports
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OMH/NYESS	Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
RBST	Regional Business Services Team
VCC	Virtual Career Center

NYS uses several different operating systems including data/case management systems and the NYS Job Bank. Currently, a unified case management system is not feasible across programs due to strict laws around data sharing agreements. However, partners work together in other ways to ensure a coordinated approach to implementing State strategies.

Titles I and III, overseen by NYSDOL, utilize OSOS as the State's case management system. Customer and business records are created and housed in OSOS, and other entities and partners also use this system for participant reporting. The partners on the RBSTs, including Titles II and IV, utilize it for tracking business engagement activities, and job seeking candidates with OSOS records are matched with available jobs businesses post on the NYS Job Bank.

Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD) established uniform metrics for all grants and a common database to measure impact across programs. This robust set of metrics will evaluate the impact of ESD/OSWD's grantmaking, including job placement, wages before and after program participation, hiring barriers faced, and supportive services utilized. Grantees are required to collect and report data at regular intervals throughout the grant period, and all data is stored and tracked through a new dashboard within OSOS.

NYS also successfully integrated several employment services systems into a single system, using the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant as a catalyst. This comprehensive employment system is OMH/NYESS and provides all New Yorkers, regardless of their (dis)ability, with a single point of access to all employment-related services and supports, including job matching with jobs posted by businesses on the NYS Job Bank, which maintains a daily average of more than 230,000 job openings. OMH/NYESS includes the following State-level agencies: OMH, NYSDOL, NYSED, OASAS, NYS OPWDD, NYSOFA, and the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. Providers of employment-related

supports and services licensed by, or contracting with, one (1) of the participating State agencies are also able to sign up to utilize this system. OMH/NYESS creates the ability to centralize employment service/support information, greatly improving the ability to coordinate employment supports and services among multiple providers and across multiple systems.

NYSDOL, in partnership with OMH, developed and implemented OMH/NYESS. OMH/NYESS is made up of various computer applications and data sets. Employment related data collection is available by OMH/NYESS partners using OSOS. NYSDOL, in collaboration with OMH/NYESS, continues to improve this partnership and employment related data collection through continuous communication and system enhancements.

OCFS/NYSCB is currently working with OMH/NYESS on a Memorandum of Understanding to share data and has already developed one with NYSDOL to gather and share wage data.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Program's Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) is an Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy-funded, custom built, online management information system that has been used by funded programs in NYS since Program Year 2007. It is the database for all adult literacy program data and provides reports designed to check for data quality, performance measures, and compliance with NRS, including the required 14 NRS reporting tables. To ensure consistent and continual availability of training support, ASISTS provides several training opportunities for staff (remote and in-person), focusing on daily required activities for program data recording and reporting.

JobZone and the VCC are also systems platforms linked to OSOS. JobZone is an interactive resource to help Adult customers manage their careers. Individuals can log in to explore and save career-related information, examine career interests and skills, and research occupations and career pathways. The VCC is an online job search site, designed to help job seekers find their next career by searching and applying for jobs that match their skills and experience, as well as explore training opportunities to broaden their career options.

Labor Market Information (LMI)

NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research has labor market analysts in 10 (ten) regions across the State. These analysts provide data about wages, important economic trends, and labor availability in their region to employers, developers and others. They also provide occupational and career information to job seekers. Statewide, NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research provides various types of Labor Market Information (LMI), such as that outlined in the Economic and Workforce Analysis sections of this Plan. NYSDOL's LMI webpage includes information on employment by industry, local unemployment rates, occupational and industry projections, occupational wages, and licensed and certified occupations.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Acronym List for Section III.b.2.	
CEO	Chief Elected Official
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NYS	New York State

NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
PGL	Program Guidance Letter
TA	Technical Advisory
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

NYS directs the One-Stop Career Center System through ongoing technical assistance on policy and the release of Technical Advisories (TAs) and Program Guidance Letters (PGLs). As these policies are initially developed, stakeholders across the System are consistently engaged to provide valuable input and commentary. Through a variety of methods, including webinars, teleconferences, in-person meetings, and written documents, the LWDBs, CEOs, and local one-stop partners are engaged as necessary to reinforce a working knowledge of established and newly developed NYS workforce policies. In addition, most policies will require a more formal release to serve as a point of reference for the System. These releases are developed in collaboration with the Interagency Team, core program partners, and local System stakeholders. The list of topics covered by these written TAs and PGLs is significant, so they cannot all be commented on in the Plan, but some key WIOA implementation topics include:

- Universal Accessibility of Career Center Services;
- WIOA Local and Regional Workforce Planning;
- WIOA Title I Adult Priority of Service;
- Veterans' Priority of Service;
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU);
- One-Stop System Operator Selection;
- Performance Measures; and
- Data Element Validation (DEV).

A comprehensive list of current NYSDOL TAs and PGLs can be found on the NYSDOL Policy Directives webpage. NYSDOL monitors the implementation of the policies and provides technical assistance to the local areas as needed. Additionally, NYSDOL may determine that it is necessary to make updates to TAs based on requests for clarification and/or feedback from the local System and partners.

Regarding Career Center partner program contributions to the Centers as required by WIOA, the NYS partners developed TA #20-02.1 and Program Year 2020 MOU Guidance document to assist LWDBs with completion of the WIOA MOU. The core program partners also worked to improve the State approval process for the MOUs. As of January 2026, there are 22 LWDBs with fully executed MOUs. We continue to work with all remaining LWDBs to finalize the MOUs and obtain signatures from all required partners. It is anticipated that all MOUs will be fully executed by June 30, 2026.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

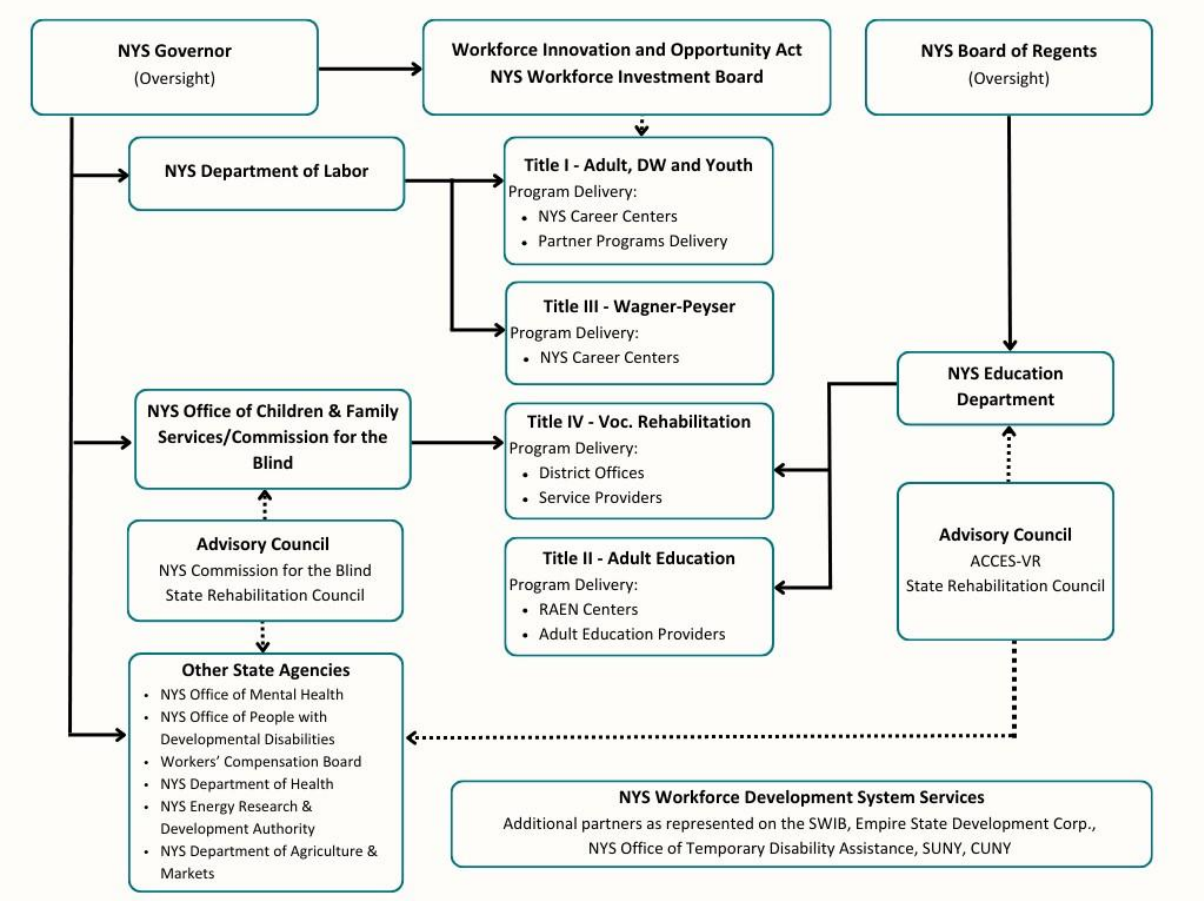
Within the New York State (NYS) System, the Governor oversees the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), including OCFS/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB), while the Board of Regents is responsible for the New York State Education Department (NYSED), including NYSED/Adult Career and Continuing Education

Services- Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and NYSED/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services- Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-AEPP). NYSED, OCFS/NYSCB, and NYSDOL are linked through the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), with each agency being an ex-officio member of the board, and the WIOA Interagency Team. Both NYSED/ACCES-VR and OCFS/NYSCB include a State Rehabilitation Council, responsible for providing advice and support to both programs in the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities.

NYSED oversees Title II-Adult Education and Family Literacy and Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation. Under program delivery, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP oversees seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers and 317 adult education projects. NYSED/ACCES-VR has 15 District Offices located throughout NYS and ten (10) satellite offices. Services are provided to individuals by vendors and in some instances by NYSED/ACCES-VR staff. OCFS/NYSCB also oversees Title IV-VR, and like NYSED/ACCES-VR, utilizes its seven (7) District Offices for program delivery to participants. NYSDOL oversees Title I-Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs and Title III-Wagner-Peyser, and utilizes NYS's 90+ Career Centers and partner programs for service delivery.

All three (3) agencies refer participants to one another to provide the best service possible to all. In addition, the System includes additional partners who are also represented on the SWIB and Interagency Team, including Empire State Development, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, New York State Office for the Aging, Department of State, the Workers' Compensation Board, Office of Mental Health, Department of Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, State University of New York, and City University of New York.

New York State WIOA Organizational Chart



B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

Reconstitution of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) following the Pandemic was necessary to ensure membership continues to reflect critical industries in New York State) (NYS) and to replace members who resigned or changed positions. During 2022-2023, the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) was able to re-focus on reconstituting the SWIB, working with the Office of General Services Appointments Office to appoint and re-appoint several SWIB members, particularly those from the business community.

The SWIB has met quarterly since October 2023 to establish the goals and strategies for the System, share best practices among members related to hiring needs and emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, and brainstorm ways to supplement federal funding cuts to the State and local areas. In 2024, the Strategic Investments & Evaluation and Career & Industry subcommittees were established to focus on specific aspects of the System and recommend innovative ways to continually improve services to both job seeking and business participants.

Membership Roster

Each member's name, organization, and affiliation for the SWIB will be presented in the membership chart once all members are vetted and once the appointment process has been completed for all members.

Name	Organization	Affiliation
Governor	Chamber	Governor
Commissioner	NYS Department of Labor	Core Program/Ex Officio
Commissioner	NYS Office of Children and Family Services	Core Program/Ex Officio
Commissioner	NYS Education Department	Core Program/Ex Officio
Commissioner	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance	Ex Officio
President & CEO	Empire State Development Corporation (ESD)	Ex Officio
Chancellor	SUNY	Ex Officio
Chancellor	CUNY	Ex Officio
Donovan Richards**	Borough President, Queens County NY	Local Elected Official (County)
TBD	TBD	Local Elected Official (City)
Kimberly Townsend	Loretto	Business

Zach Arnold	University of Rochester Medical Center	Business
Shawna Papale	Mohawk Valley EDGE	Business
Dawn Burlew	Watkins Glen International	Business
Todd Tranum	Manufacturers Association of the Southern Tier	Business
Annmarie Lanesey Payette	CanCode Communities	Business
Rose Duhan	Community Health Care Association of NYS	Business
Melissa Autilio Fleischut	New York State Restaurant Association	Business
Tony Baird	Tony Baird Electronics, Inc.	Business
Sergio Esteban	Labella Associates PC	Business
Norbert Fuest	Appletree HR & Safety Consultants Inc.	Business
Jessica Johnson-Cope	Johnson Security Bureau, Inc.	Business
Patricia Fusco	Fusco Personnel, Inc.	Business
Harold King	Council of Industry	Business
Joe Nehme**	Micron Technology Inc.	Business
Ryan Delgado**	National Grid	Business
John LaRow	Gilbane Building Company	Business
Ashley Ranslow	National Federation of Independent Business	Business
Christine McLear**	GlobalFoundries	Business
Kendra Hems	Trucking Association of New York	Business
John VanNattan	Arrow Bank	Business
Merrill Pond**	Partnership for New York City	Business
Albert Catalano	Northeast Region Bricklayers & Craftworkers; NYS Building & Construction Trades Council	Apprenticeship Representative/Organized Labor

John Durso	Local 388 Long Island Federation of Labor	Organized Labor
Greg Lancette	CNY and Northern New York Building Trades Council	Organized Labor
David Mathis	Oneida County Workforce Development Office	Youth
Jeff Palmer**	Capital Region BOCES	Youth
Katie Geise	Chautauqua County Local Workforce Development Board	CBO
Amy Desjardins	Workforce Development Institute	CBO
Florence McCue	New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)	Mature Worker
Dan McGraw	International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 15839	Veteran
Harry Bronson	NYS Assembly	Legislative – Assembly
Al Stirpe	NYS Assembly	Legislative – Assembly
Jessica Ramos	NYS Senate	Legislative – Senate
Sean Ryan	NYS Senate	Legislative – Senate

** Appointment Pending

Each member's name, organization, and affiliation for the SWIB will be presented in the membership chart once all members are vetted and once the appointment process has been completed for all members.

According to SWIB bylaws, nominations to business and labor representative positions are solicited from appropriate State-level business/labor organizations, consistent with WIOA.

Board Activities

All appointed members have been informed of their responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- Advising on strategies for workforce development system improvement;
- Development and review of the Combined State Plan;
- Review of Statewide policies and programs involving workforce development to develop recommendations for an accessible and inclusive System;
- Development of strategies for aligning core and other programs;
- Improving access to the System, especially for those with barriers to employment;
- Supporting industry partnerships and career pathways;
- Disseminating best practices to the System; and
- Supporting the Career Center System and all core program delivery systems.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Acronym List for Section III.b.4.A.	
ASISTS	Adult Student Information System and Technical Support
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
HSE	High School Equivalency
ITAP	Individual Technical Assistance Program
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MSG	Measurable Skill Gains
NRS	National Reporting System
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
NYSOFA	New York State Office for the Aging
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PIRL	Participant Individual Layout Record
PY	Program Year
RAEN	Regional Adult Education Network
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAADI	TAA Data Integrity
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) continues to focus on complying with the mandated WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance reporting requirements, including measures to:

- Reinforce data entry policy for staff;
- Categorize participants based on their job readiness and prescribed additional services;
- Leverage new technology; and
- Effectively serve business customers.

NYSDOL provides targeted training and technical assistance related to the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance through regular communication, sharing of best practices, individualized assistance

for areas that are struggling, and required Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs). Quarterly performance report cards from NYSDOL to Local Workforce Development Board (LWDBs) provide lists of customers who were included in the Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) indicators, giving them the opportunity to review and correct any data entry errors and improve overall performance. Since Q4 of Program Year (PY) 2021, NYSDOL has also provided the LWDBs with lists of customers in the Adult Priority of Service metric to ensure data entry is being captured appropriately, which has contributed to an approximately thirty percent (30%) increase in the Statewide Adult Priority of Service number as of the end of PY 2024.

Performance goals for Local Workforce Development Area (LWDAs) are set through a negotiation process and assessment scores are used to measure performance outcomes. Proposed goals are determined prior to the negotiation process and act as a starting point for the negotiations. Negotiated goals are agreed upon by the parties involved in the negotiation process. Adjusted goals are calculated after the end of the PY by recalculating the negotiated goals using the statistical adjustment model to account for circumstances that take place during the PY that could not be anticipated during the negotiation process.

NYSDOL provides quarterly performance reports to LWDBs. These reports include negotiated goals as well as cumulative information for the PY on participants, exiters, Q2 and Q4 employment rates, median earnings, credential attainment, and MSG for each Local Workforce Development Area and New York State (NYS). NYSDOL also provides ad-hoc reports for self-evaluation at the request of LWDBs. These reports allow the LWDB to keep track of its progress and highlight areas that need attention before problems arise. These reports also allow NYSDOL to see which areas are successful and which areas need assistance. If an area looks like it may fail to reach its goals, NYSDOL will reach out to determine if technical assistance or training could help. If an area is successful, NYSDOL will reach out to document best practices. These best practices are shared through training and regular meetings with LWDB Directors.

Program performance at the State level is assessed by using individual indicator scores, program scores, and State indicator scores. State performance is considered unsatisfactory when any of the individual indicator scores fall below 50% for the PY, any program score falls below 90% for the PY, or any State indicator score falls below 90% for the PY.

Program performance at the local level is assessed using only the individual indicator scores and is limited to performance of the Title I programs. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the LWDB's adjusted goals after the close of the PY to determine if local performance goals were achieved. NYSDOL has set an unsatisfactory performance threshold at an outcome-to-goal ratio of less than 80% per indicator for a PY. The LWDB must develop a PIP for unsatisfactory performance of an indicator in a PY. NYSDOL will also provide technical assistance, which may include assistance in the development of the PIP and/or other actions designed to assist the local area in improving performance. If a local area receives unsatisfactory performance for the same indicator for three (3) consecutive PYs, the Governor will take corrective action, which includes development of a reorganization plan.

Similarly, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program uses data provided through Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) submission and analyzed through the TAA Data Integrity (TAADI) report card process to measure performance. The TAADI framework identifies a series of measures that target both potentially inaccurate data, as well as accurately reported data that reflect substandard program administration. TAADI requires states to review performance against 18 measures quarterly and to specify by when issues will be resolved, categorize the types of issues,

and provide a plan for resolution. The TAA program, working with NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research, analyzes each customer record that contributed to underperformance in each quarter. This assessment informs training for case managers, as well as clarification to system guidance. In addition to TAADI reviews, TAA case records are subject to Program Monitoring and Financial Oversight and Technical Assistance reviews.

System-wide assessment and implementation of the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance measures was initially burdensome for all core partners, but Titles I and III have over the past several years found a good flow. All partners continue to evaluate and mitigate variables impacting performance measures as well as review, update and implement training and guidance at the staff level for effective reporting and collection of the performance measures.

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) and Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) are both assessed annually by the six (6) common performance measures under WIOA, including Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter after Exit, Credential Attainment, MSG, and Effectiveness in Serving Employers. The first five (5) performance measures are reported jointly by OCFS/NYSCB and NYSED/ACCES-VR. The sixth performance measure, Effectiveness in Serving Employers, is reported at a Statewide level for all partners.

The annual process of data validation and on-site monitoring for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) staff the opportunity to ensure regional SCSEP providers comply with SCSEP regulations, and that communicated information has been implemented.

The NYSOFA monitoring tool reviews all required SCSEP policies and regulations and is an effective indicator in determining if the providers are following United States Department of Labor statutes, regulations, and policies. Follow-up letters are sent to the providers indicating the results, strengths, and weaknesses (if any) found during the monitoring visit. If any issues related to SCSEP policies and regulations are found, a corrective action plan is required, and the Program Director works with the provider until the issue is resolved. Data validation coupled with the follow-up of those results provide further assurance that understanding and compliance with SCSEP regulations are implemented throughout the program area.

NYSOFA fiscal staff monitors each regional provider through onsite monitoring. Fiscal staff previously monitored SCSEP when conducting onsite monitoring of each Area Agencies on Aging since the program was previously administered by 29 Area Agencies on Aging. Now that the program is operated through a regional model, fiscal staff created a SCSEP-specific monitoring tool and will conduct onsite visits with each regional provider after the final claims are submitted.

Some local social service districts contract out their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program employment operations to local employment and training services, who co-locate with the district at the local Career Center. Each contract is developed directly between the one-stop partner and the district through a process that might involve regular meetings, review of fiscal documentation and developing outcome measures. The contracts involve specific policy requirements that are based in State regulations, with the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance as the contact agency to provide guidance and interpretation of said regulations.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Program's Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) is a New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP)-funded, custom built, online-management information system. This system has been used by funded programs in NYS since PY 2007. In addition to serving as the database for all program data related to adult literacy, it also provides reports designed to check for data quality, performance measure, and compliance with the National Reporting System (NRS). To ensure consistent and continual availability of training support, ASISTS provides a number of trainings, focusing on daily required activities for program data recording and reporting.

Leadership will continue to support a contract for technical assistance, training, and troubleshooting to improve data quality and monitor program performance Statewide. The NRS accountability specialist funded by this NYSED contract works directly with NYSED/ACCES-AEPP staff. Duties include focusing on the largest providers with significant enrollments and programs needing intensive technical assistance to achieve improvement. Annually, under the Combined State Plan, programs from each Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) region are selected for inclusion in the Individual Technical Assistance Program (ITAP). The Big Five city school district programs (New York City, Yonkers, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo) consistently receive support from ITAP, given their large size and possible impact on Statewide performance measures. All ITAP programs are desk monitored, accompanied by monthly conference calls and an annual scheduled site visit. All communication and quarterly data analysis is collected electronically and stored on the NYS accountability website in a secure, password protected portal for each program. The portal is accessible by the NRS Office, the NYSED/ACCES-AEPP Regional staff, the respective RAEN Director, and the program manager.

At the conclusion of each fiscal year, report cards for each funded project are generated from the data in the Management Information System and are reviewed and published by NYSED. In addition to measuring progress toward performance benchmarks, the NYS report cards quartile rank all funded programs. Through this effort, programs can see their performance measures against federally negotiated benchmarks but are also able to scale their performance against all other similarly funded projects throughout the State. When a program's performance places that program in Quartile 1 and the program has missed one (1) or more of the State benchmarks, the program is placed under Corrective Action. The program is required to submit a program improvement plan and must correspond electronically on the accountability website. Quarterly data reviews are conducted by the NRS Accountability Office and subsequent conference calls and/or web meetings are scheduled with those programs exhibiting poor performance or inconsistent data patterns. The NRS Accountability Office assists in identifying problems and trends on a Statewide and regional level.

Professional development in the areas of data collection, recording, and reporting continues to be a priority. Added to that is the continual need for NRS training at all levels. The Accountability Specialist will provide a minimum of two (2) training events in each of the seven (7) geographic regions annually. Topics include NRS Foundations, NRS for Teachers, and NYS Report Card Training.

The report cards evaluate programs under two (2) distinct methodologies. The first is a standard benchmark measurement. NYS benchmarks for performance in MSG, Post Test Rate, Enrollment, and Follow up Outcomes are set each year by the NYSED/ACCES-AEPP Office based on the averages derived from the prior year's State data. When programs meet all three (3) benchmarks, they are scored as "proficient."

The second method of evaluation is based on a quartile ranking among all programs in the State. In the case of MSG, the program's scores are weighted based on the NRS Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) indicating the strongest proponent for gain as evidence in the data. The weighting of each EFL is determined by the aggregate data analysis of the prior year's data. This methodology assures that programs serving those students populations that are the hardest to serve are not penalized for lower performance levels.

The quartiles are determined using the following rubric:

- 50% of the score is from the weighted MSG;
- 20% of the score is from the post-test rate;
- 20% of the score is based on the four (4) follow-up measures; and
- 10% of the score will be based on High School Equivalency (HSE) achievement.

Local program data is entered monthly into ASISTS. Data is reviewed on a quarterly basis:

- Quarter I (7/01-9/30) reviewed by 10/31;
- Quarter II (10/01-12/31) reviewed by 1/31;
- Quarter III (1/01-3/31) reviewed by 4/30; and
- Quarter IV (4/01-6/30) reviewed by 7/31.

Note that the NYSED/ACCES-AEPP program office has until October 1st each year to finalize the annual data submitted over the previous four (4) quarters. It is the responsibility of the program to have data entry up to date for each quarter. ITAP will continue to support those programs presenting with the need for intense technical assistance. The contracted Accountability Office, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP Regional staff, and RAEN directors work closely with these programs to identify gaps in quality and performance and implement an effective program improvement plan. Effective use of webinars and conference calls provide a consistent line of communication with these programs as they implement change to improve their performance. As programs improve their performance, they are removed from ITAP status.

NYSED issues a Program Evaluation Report for each funded program accessible in the management information system daily as data is updated each evening. The Program Evaluation Report will identify whether the agency is progressing toward and/or meeting the NYS benchmarks for MSG, Post Test Rate, Follow up Outcomes, and survey success. Program staff, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP Regional Staff, RAEN Directors, and the Accountability office can monitor program progress and attend to any deficiencies or alternate trends. The benchmarks set annually by NYSED based upon NRS targets negotiated with United States Education Department and previous year performance data from programs funded by NYSED/ACCES-AEPP. Programs that do not meet these NYS annual benchmarks will be required to undertake a formal corrective action planning process. The program must submit and receive NYSED approval for a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that identifies specific steps for meeting NYS annual benchmarks by June 30th of the current year.

Both the CAP and Continuous Evaluation Process processes are reported and tracked through the accountability website for each program funded through this request for proposal.

Under the federal NRS for adult literacy programs, NYS, and ultimately local service providers, will be evaluated based on performance indicators. Successful applicants must submit data based on the federal requirements of the NRS that demonstrate their effectiveness. Additional information on the NRS may be found on the website.

Tracking data in ASISTS follows a four-category process. These categories are sequential and allow for the diversity among NYS's adult literacy programming. The categories are as follows:

Category I – Setup

Programs enter the following categories of data to set up their data account in ASISTS:

- Funding sources – Programs can track services funded by multiple sources.
- Sites – Providers enter data pertaining to each of their sites and connect it to services so they can run reports separately by site.
- Outcomes – In addition to tracking required outcomes, programs may also track outcomes that are specific to their own specialized programming, such as credentials achieved, training or career pathways.
- Personnel – Providers add teacher information including name, experience, certification information, and longevity.
- Classes/Services – Providers create their roster of classes adding the schedule, teacher, and type/level of classes.

Category II – Registration

All State-funded programs must use a standard registration form, the Individual Student Record Form (ISRF). Through meaningful conversations, the completion of the ISRF form aims to help programs capture the student's Barriers to Employment. This information is significant in referring students for supportive services with other core partners, providing students with the necessary academic supports to assure their success in the program and, ultimately, impact the program's academic retention and employment efforts.

- Student information – This includes name; date of birth; contact information; and demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, employment status, educational background, barriers to employment, and public assistance status. ASISTS also allows providers to note whether a person is a parent or disabled. Social Security Numbers are also recorded.
- Co-enrollment – Programs, during the intake process, are required to collect information from students regarding their co-enrollment in other WIOA programs to include Titles I, III, and IV. These data are reported in ASISTS and updated annually.
- Initial Assessment – All providers use standardized assessments. Adult education programs may choose from the list of approvable assessments. For Adult Basic Education, the most updated assessments for math and reading are provided to students including Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), TABE Complete Language Assessment System-English (CLAS-E), Basic English Skills Test (BEST), BEST Plus (for speaking/listening for English as Second Language learners) and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS). Assessments are conducted as part of the intake process and are part of the 12 hours of contact with the student. These assessments are used to place students in literacy classes and diagnose learning needs.
- Enrollment – Once registration is complete, registrants are assigned to classes based on their assessments and availability.

Category III – Services

- Contact Hours – Adult Education providers use ASISTS to track attendance hours on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Minimum requirement is monthly.
- Test scores – Post-tests are given by providers at regular intervals based on NYS Assessment Policy submitted to the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to demonstrate learning gains. ASISTS calculates the MSG based on their standardized assessment scores.

Category IV – Outcomes

Adult Education providers track student outcomes regularly, both during and after their participation in a program.

- MSG – NRS guidelines define a student as demonstrating MSG when their test score places him or her in an NRS level (one of six predefined educational functioning levels) that is higher than the one determined by that student's initial or pre-test. MSG may also be earned when a student achieves the HSE diploma, or when a student achieves a credential pre-approved by NYSED. MSG is realized when a student completes any one of these areas, multiple achievements are not factored.
- Primary follow-up outcomes – Providers focus on the following key NRS outcomes:
    - Employment, second and fourth quarter after exit;
    - Median wage earning;
    - Attaining the NYS HSE diploma;
    - Attaining an industry-recognized credential; and
    - Entering postsecondary education or training.
- Other Outcomes – ASISTS also facilitates the tracking of a wide variety of outcomes that are customized per program.

Review – Reports and Downloads

ASISTS includes the following reports to review the data and use it for reporting and management purposes.

- Funding reports – Reports that present data critical to reporting following State funding guidelines. The most critical report is the Program Evaluation report indicating on one page the most critical performance statistics NYSED uses to evaluate programs. The State-funded Employment Preparation Education State aid claim forms are also generated from ASISTS.
- Data management reports primarily meant for tracking and internal program management purposes.
- Data checks that are specifically designed to help providers detect and correct issues relating to data quality and completeness.

All of these resources will serve as the basis of core program alignment to support WIOA success.

NYSED/ACCES-AEPP will continue to refine MSG targets annually, including definitions of measures and approved assessments for individuals with barriers to employment “who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers.”

Seven (7) RAEN centers and the NRS accountability specialist, funded with WIOA leadership funds, are preparing to mount professional development and training for agencies that will be WIOA-funded. The federal office set the reporting deadline annually for NRS data to August 15. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP has taken steps to comply with required deadlines. All training and performance reporting policies will be closely coordinated with partner programs to ensure a smooth transition.

B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A).

Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

Acronym List for Section III.b.4.B.	
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MSG	Measurable Skill Gains
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
OTDA	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PY	Program Year
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

At the conclusion of each fiscal year, report cards for each Title II-funded project are generated from the data in the Management Information System and are reviewed and published by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). In addition to measuring progress toward performance benchmarks, the New York State (NYS) report cards quartile rank all funded programs. Through this effort, programs can see their performance measures against federally negotiated benchmarks but are also able to scale their performance against all other similarly funded projects throughout the State. When a program's performance places that program in Quartile 1 and the program has missed one (1) or more of the State benchmarks, the program is placed under Corrective Action. The program is required to submit a program improvement plan and must correspond electronically on the accountability website. Quarterly data reviews are conducted by the NRS Accountability Office and subsequent conference calls and/or web meetings are scheduled with those programs exhibiting poor performance or inconsistent data patterns.

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) uses quarterly data reported to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to determine its effectiveness in meeting the performance measures under WIOA. Data on Employment Rate 2nd and 4th quarter after exit and Median Earnings 2nd quarter after exit are obtained from NYSDOL Unemployment Insurance data under a Memorandum of

Understanding. These measures are reviewed and analyzed quarterly through case management system validation and the use of Power Bi (a Microsoft business analytics tool that turns data into interactive visualizations, reports, and dashboards) and are shared with District Offices indicating areas of strength and areas of improvement.

Additionally, NYSED/ACCES-VR has developed tools to assist the management and staff in its District Offices to assess and evaluate performance as well as to identify specific strategies that may be needed for improvements by District Offices, regionally, and/or Statewide. NYSED/ACCES-VR District Offices receive comprehensive reports of all findings of a review. NYSED/ACCES-VR service vendors are also reviewed and provided with a comprehensive case review report that rates each area of service. If any area falls under the defined compliance rate, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is developed to address the deficit. Guidance is provided through an in-person exit meeting when the findings and recommendations are shared.

Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) is provided quarterly dashboards from RSA providing data on all performance measures. OCFS/NYSCB reviews that data quarterly and identifies areas of improvement and need. OCFS/NYSCB works with staff and partner agencies to identify strategies to address those needs through quarterly meetings and quality assurance reviews.

OCFS/NYSCB has also worked to implement a new case management system that will assist staff in better tracking and data collection to improve accurate reporting and allow OCFS/NYSCB Home Office to better identify areas of improvement and strategies to support staff in achieving these.

NYSDOL provides quarterly performance reports. These reports include negotiated goals as well as cumulative information for the Program Year (PY) on participants, exiters, Q2 and Q4 Employment Rates, Median Earnings, Credential Attainment, Measurable Skill Gains (MSG), and Adult Priority of Service performance for each Local Workforce Development Area and NYS. NYSDOL also provides ad-hoc reports for self-evaluation at the request of Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). These reports allow the LWDB to keep track of its progress and highlight any areas that may need attention before they become a problem. These reports also allow NYSDOL to see which areas are successful and which areas may need assistance. If an area looks like it may fail to reach its goals, NYSDOL will reach out to determine if technical assistance or training could help. If an area is successful, NYSDOL will reach out to document best practices. These best practices are shared through training and regular meetings with LWDB Directors.

Program performance at the State level is assessed by using individual indicator scores, program scores, and State indicator scores. State performance is considered unsatisfactory when any of the individual indicator scores fall below 50% for the PY, any program score falls below 90% for the PY, or any State indicator score falls below 90% for the PY.

Program performance at the local level is assessed using only the individual indicator scores and is limited to performance of the Title I programs. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the LWDB's adjusted goals after the close of the PY to determine if local performance goals were achieved. NYSDOL has set an unsatisfactory performance threshold at an outcome-to-goal ratio of less than 80% per indicator for a PY. The LWDB must develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for unsatisfactory performance of an indicator in a PY. NYSDOL will also provide technical assistance, which may include assistance in the development of the PIP and/or other actions designed to assist the local area in improving performance. If a local area receives unsatisfactory

performance for the same indicator for three (3) consecutive PYs, the Governor will take corrective action, which includes development of a reorganization plan.

Following PY 2023, NYSDOL conducted an analysis of the local areas' Adjusted Goals to determine which failed one or more of the Primary Indicators of Performance and would require a PIP. In most instances, issues were found with the Credential Attainment and MSG indicators. Requests for PIPs were sent to LWDBs in December 2024, requiring local areas to provide information on how they plan to increase performance in these measures throughout PY 2024. NYSDOL has also attempted to assist local areas failing these measures by providing lists each quarter of customers in the Credential Attainment and MSG indicators so that data entry may be corrected where necessary and therefore increase performance.

In its program oversight capacity, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) conducts Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) policy reviews on each district every one to four years depending on size, where samples of case-level data are reviewed to ensure recipients are being properly engaged in activities. After the reviews are complete, OTDA develops CAPs for the districts to resolve any findings, which are then tracked for implementation. In the interim between reviews, OTDA also conducts regular visits to district employment offices and contracted provider sites to continue monitoring the services they offer from a program compliance standpoint.

Starting in October 2024, as part of changes made under the federal Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, NYS's TANF program became subject to new work outcomes that are similar to WIOA reporting measures. On May 5, 2025, OTDA released the initial report of this "performance indicator" data it collected on TANF participants. This included percentages of work-eligible individuals who maintained Employment in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exiting TANF, the Median Earnings of these individuals, and the percentage of TANF individuals under age 24 in high school or an equivalency program who graduate within one year after leaving TANF.

Partner programs have begun using these previous assessment results to encourage further coordination and ensure services are being provided as seamlessly as possible. For example, NYS has shifted focus to ensure Adult Priority of Service requirements are being met and found that much greater collaboration could be taking place between local Social Service district offices and Career Centers. To foster this, a Workforce Synergy Forum session specific to Adult Priority of Service was held in February 2024, with local area staff providing best practices for collaborating with their local district office and referring customers between partners. Additionally, the core partners have come together since the initial development of this four-year Plan to collaborate on the shared business indicator, Effectiveness in Serving Employers, to continually assess outcomes and ensure all are successful in its Statewide and local implementation.

C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

Acronym List for Section III.b.4.C.	
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor

OWDR	Office of Workforce Data and Research
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Y&YAD	Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities

The New York State Department of Labor's (NYSDOL's) Policy, Strategy, and Research Division established the Office of Workforce Data and Research (OWDR) in September 2024, to create a Statewide longitudinal data system that will be used to analyze workforce and educational data and forecast future workforce needs. OWDR's initiatives contribute to the broader goal of providing transparency and empowering New York State (NYS) to make informed decisions on funding allocation and policy development. A public dashboard is now available covering NYSDOL-administered WIOA programs and provides information on program and participant outcomes.

In accordance with the statutory provisions for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program contained in the Social Security Act, states began conducting evaluations of RESEA interventions and service delivery strategies in Fiscal Year 2020 to support building new evidence of effective RESEA interventions that can be utilized in future RESEA program design and delivery. As part of the study, states are required to conduct an evaluation of the RESEA program to support current program designs and Title I and III activities are being evaluated. Outcomes from the RESEA evaluation will provide information on WIOA activities impacting Title I Dislocated Workers and Title III.

NYSDOL is collaborating with the Connecticut Department of Labor to carry out the RESEA evaluation. NYS selected 40 of its 65 Career Centers implementing RESEA to participate in the impact study which represents large, medium, and small Centers located in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The Connecticut Department of Labor has included all five (5) of their RESEA Career Centers in the evaluation and will combine results with NYS to allow for a larger sample for analysis. NYS and Connecticut randomized a total of 161,000 customers into different treatment groups including a control group. Each of the four (4) treatment groups provided customers with a different number of mandatory RESEA appointments and services to ascertain if reemployment outcomes are more favorable for those who receive more services. NYS has contracted with State University of New York Rockefeller to evaluate the impact that mandatory RESEA Career Center appointments and reemployment services have on customer outcomes as measured by analyzing participants' reemployment rate after 2nd quarter of program exit, median earning in the 2nd quarter after program exit, and Unemployment Insurance benefit duration.

NYS will also be participating in evaluations related to the youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD) population though a recently awarded Employment Transition Model demonstration grant referred to as "DreamLink NY." DreamLink NY's goal is to improve the employment outcomes of Y&YAD, as well as to increase NYS's capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved Y&YAD and their families. Core partners in this grant include Titles I, II, IV, and Office of Mental Health and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene. The goals of the evaluation are to develop rigorous evidence on the approaches that work for serving target populations and the impacts of the demonstration projects. The evaluation will include an implementation, outcome, and customer experience study.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Acronym List for Section III.b.5.A.i.	
DW	Dislocated Worker
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Title I

Most of the funding for the Title I Adult, Dislocated Workers (DW), and Youth programs is provided directly by formula to 33 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) for administration of program services as directed by the Governor-certified Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). As authorized by WIOA and the annual federal budget appropriation, the remaining funding, up to 15% of each Title I Program for Statewide Activities, plus an additional up to 25% of the DW Program for Rapid Response Activities, is set aside for required and allowable State-level activities including administration, policy and program development, rapid response services, business services, fiscal and programmatic oversight and monitoring, and State-level employment and training programs as directed under the discretion of the Governor.

New York State's (NYS's) use of State-level WIOA funds for workforce activities is in compliance with the laws required and allowable activities for these funds. The Governor's Office, in conjunction with the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and consultation with other State and local workforce partners, guides the use of these funds by establishing priority projects including sector-based workforce strategies. The LWDBs are an important part of the System and NYSDOL has regular contact with them regarding the Title I program and available grant opportunities.

15% Statewide Activities funding, along with unobligated second- and third-year Rapid Response funding (25% of DW funding), provides an opportunity for State-level programs to expand services to disadvantaged adults, incumbent workers, and youth, as well as continue to serve DWs. Current and upcoming programs include On-the-Job Training, customized training, middle-skills training, occupational training for justice system-involved individuals, pre-apprenticeship training, and youth employment and training programs.

The local area formula funding is distributed according to factors indicating local area need. For the Adult and Youth programs, funds are distributed according to:

- Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5% or more;
- Number of unemployed in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force; and
- Number of Adults/Youth whose income, or whose family income, was below poverty or below 70% of the lower living standard income level.

According to WIOA (Division H, Title 1 sec. 128 for Youth and sec. 133 for Adults and DWs), states must utilize a minimum percentage (or stop loss) to ensure no local area receives an allocation percentage that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage received by the local area for

the previous two (2) years. An allocation percentage is the local area's share or percentage of funds allocated to all local areas. States must not use 90% of the average amount allocated to the local area for the last two (2) years. States must obtain amounts necessary to increase allocations to local areas to comply with the minimum percentage requirement by proportionately reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

In accordance with this, NYS requires that LWDAs receive no less than 90% of their portion of the average of the allocations from the previous two (2) years. This applies to each of the Title I programs; Adult, Youth, and DW, and is intended to shield local agencies from precipitous declines in funding from year to year.

In our allocation formula, NYS calculates the amounts necessary to increase allocations to local areas to comply with the minimum percentage requirement, by proportionately reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The local area formula funding is distributed according to factors indicating local area need. For the Adult and Youth programs, funds are distributed according to:

- Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5% or more;
- Number of unemployed in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force; and
- Number of Adults/Youth whose income, or whose family income, was below poverty or below 70% of the lower living standard income level.

According to WIOA (Division H, Title 1 sec. 128 for Youth and sec. 133 for Adults and DWs), states must utilize a minimum percentage (or stop loss) to ensure no local area receives an allocation percentage that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage received by the local area for the previous two (2) years. An allocation percentage is the local area's share or percentage of funds allocated to all local areas. States must not use 90% of the average amount allocated to the local area for the last two (2) years. States must obtain amounts necessary to increase allocations to local areas to comply with the minimum percentage requirement by proportionately reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Acronym List for Section III.b.5.A.iii.	
DW	Dislocated Worker
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Boards
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TEGL	Training and Employment Guidance Letter
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

For the Title I Dislocated Worker (DW) Program, funds are distributed according to:

- Total number of Unemployment Insurance beneficiaries and long term unemployed;
- Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5% or more;

- Number of unemployed under the Mass Layoff Statistics program;
- Change in employment in industries with job losses in the past five (5) years; and
- Number of farms with net losses.

Greater detail on the Title I formula funding allocations for the local areas is available on the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) webpage.

According to WIOA (Division H, Title 1 sec. 128 for Youth and sec. 133 for Adults and DWs), states must utilize a minimum percentage (or stop loss) to ensure that no local area receives an allocation percentage that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage received by the local area for the previous two (2) years. An allocation percentage is the local area's share or percentage of funds allocated to all local areas. States must not use 90% of the average amount allocated to the local area for the last two (2) years. States must obtain amounts necessary to increase allocations to local areas to comply with the minimum percentage requirement by proportionately reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA)

The Federal Trade Act provides a formula driven* allocation to New York State (NYS) which is further allocated to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) on an individual on-demand basis. Special benefits under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program include financial support for tuition and related expenses toward training for a new job, financial help in making a job search in other areas, or relocation to an area where jobs are more plentiful. Those who qualify may also be entitled to weekly Trade Readjustment Allowance after their unemployment compensation is exhausted. Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance provides wage supplements for reemployed older workers whose reemployment resulted in lower wages than those earned in their trade-affected employment, may also be available.

In NYS, WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded staff and services are functionally aligned within each of the local Career Center offices, thus allowing services to be provided to TAA customers seamlessly and efficiently. Functional alignment plays an important role in that trade-funded services can be layered on top of WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded services already provided through the Career Center.

Building upon the strategy of co-enrollment, NYSDOL continues to allocate sufficient resources to each LWDB to support outreach (including Rapid Response services), orientation, case management, job development, and follow-up services for DWs eligible for TAA benefits.

*Per TEGL 01-25, Fiscal Year 2025 Training and Other Activities Funds are available by request only.

B. FOR TITLE II

i. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

Acronym List for Section III.b.5.B.i.	
ACS	American Community Survey
ASISTS	Adult Student Information System and Technical Support
BOCES	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services
ESL	English as a Second Language

FY	Fiscal Year
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education
IET	Integrated Education and Training
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NRS	National Reporting System
NYS	New York State
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy
RAEN	Regional Adult Education Network
RFP	Request for Proposal
WEP	Welfare Education Program
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Adult Education and Family Literacy Core Program (Title II) funds will continue to support one of the largest and most diverse state adult education programs in the country. Since 2013, New York State Education Department (NYSED) has dedicated Title II funds to support a comprehensive and coordinated literacy system that increased the skills of approximately 116,869 out-of-school youth and adults in adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

- Approximately 18% were between the ages of 16 and 24 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024;
- 34,239 of adult students enter literacy programs employed; and
- 30,066 were unemployed upon entry in FY 2024.

In terms of the numbers and demographic profile of students served:

- Approximately 249 projects are funded to provide literacy education;
- 77% of students are ESL learners;
- 22% of students are preparing for the High School Equivalency;
- Nearly 8M hours of instruction are recorded; and
- 55% of learners moved one or more Educational Functional Levels.

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) rebid, through a request for proposal (RFP) process, approximately $50M in WIOA Title II funding and $1,843,000 in State Welfare Education Program (WEP) funds in accordance with 34 CFR 463 Subpart C. Successful awardees are funded for July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027. All awardees must meet WIOA eligibility requirements, except for NYS WEP funds, which are only open to schools and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). All applicants must demonstrate their effectiveness in delivering a quality adult literacy program.

There were four (4) separate competitions. All program areas were allocated to 33 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) based on the area's percentage of the NYS's adult population who are undereducated and lack a high school diploma or equivalency, adults in poverty, and the area's percentage of the State's adult population who speak English "less than very well" according to the

latest U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS). Competition was for funding within each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA), based upon the funds allocated to that area.

- $26M in Section 211 funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services;
- $11.3M in Section 243 funding for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education;
- $3.5M in Section 225 funding for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals; and
- $9.5M for 67 Literacy Zones.

WIOA Program Areas 1, 2, and 3 include a program of instruction that:

- Includes curriculum, lesson plans, and instructional materials aligned with NYSED/Office of Career Technical and Adult Education College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS); and
- Offers educational and career counseling services that assist an eligible individual to transition to postsecondary education or employment and is part of a career pathway.

Program Area 1

Funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services was allocated to 33 LWDAs based on the area's percentage of the State's adult population who are undereducated and lack a high school diploma or equivalency, adults in poverty, and the area's percentage of the State's adult population who speak English "less than very well" according to the latest ACS. Competition was for funding within each LWDA, based upon the funds allocated to that area.

The allocation and competitive process for this funding, fully described in Attachment 1 of the RFP Awards, was made to the highest-ranked proposals in each LWDA until the funds allocated were insufficient to fully fund the next ranked proposal with a passing score. The next ranked bidder that received a passing score but could not be funded in full within the LWDA was offered partial funding within the same LWDA. If funds remained after all eligible proposals were awarded within any given LWDA, the remaining funds were added to the amount available for distribution under the Literacy Zone competition.

Funded activities included literacy activities as defined in section 203 (9) and English Language Acquisition as defined in section 203 (6). Integrated Education and Training (IET) was fundable under this section. Per NYS policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of IET to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

Program Area 2

Funding for Integrated English Language and Civics Education was distributed through a separate Statewide competition. Individual awards were capped at $400,000 for New York City bidders and $300,000 for bidders elsewhere in the State. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of IET to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

Program Area 3

Funding for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals was distributed through a separate Statewide competition. There was a $250,000 cap for individual awards. IET, career pathways, concurrent enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism were fundable. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of IET to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

Program Area 4

Funding for Literacy Zones was distributed based upon a separate Statewide competition. Literacy Zones (www.nys-education-literacy-zones.org) support case management and interagency coordination in family welcome centers in high poverty communities and communities with high concentrations of limited English-speaking adults, and connect eligible individuals with community resources, including instruction funded under Program Areas 1 or 2 of the RFP and programs and services provided by workforce development system partners and in Career Centers.

Only Literacy Zone proposals submitted by bidders that resulted in a grant or grant contract under the previous Program Area 1 and/or Program Area 2 were reviewed. Awards were made to the highest-ranking proposals in rank order until funds remaining were insufficient to fund the next ranked proposal in full. The next ranked bidder was given the opportunity to operate a reduced program using the remaining funds in this pool.

NYSED/ACCES-AEPP ensured direct and equitable access to all eligible Title II providers by releasing a competitive five-year RFP. All eligible providers received the contract announcement and proposal procedure through broad dissemination to stakeholders, the NYS register, outreach through seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers, LWDBs, associations such as the New York Association of Community and Continuing Providers, NYS incarcerated associations, the NYSED website, and websites of vendors. NYSED funds the most diverse adult education system in the country, (Local Education Agencies (schools and BOCES), community colleges, unions, community-based organizations, three (3) library systems), and will continue to support a diverse system meeting all eligibility requirements expected under the direct and equitable requirements of WIOA.

An eligible provider submitting a proposal for Program Areas must demonstrate effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible participants, particularly eligible participants who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, math, English Language Acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in NYSED's bid for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education, or training.

Historically, there were two (2) ways in which an eligible provider could meet this requirement:

1. Submission of an NYSED National Reporting System (NRS) Report Card for the period FY 2018/2019 (if a currently funded NYSED adult literacy program was placed under Corrective Action based on performance measures from FY 2018/2019, the program is not eligible for any WIOA funding); or

2. Submission of a completed Demonstrated Effectiveness Conversion Chart for new programs that were not previously awarded (Attachment 3). NYSED reserves the right to review a bidder's calculations.

Going forward, a new WIOA RFP will be released in 2026 with updated guidance

The bidder will describe the process that will be used to adhere to the monthly and quarterly NRS data deadlines for data entered Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) including the collection, tracking, and reporting of participant and program data.

Provider data is reviewed by NYSED/ACCES-AEPP staff to detect and address deficiencies and identify opportunities for improvement, implement best practices, and set goals for the future. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP staff also use provider data to collaborate with the RAEN Centers in creating

professional development opportunities that assist providers in achieving their programming and enrollment benchmarks.

ii. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

Acronym List for Section III.b.5.B.ii.	
ASISTS	Adult Student Information System and Technical Support
CUNY	City University of New York
HSE	High School Equivalency
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NEDP	National External Diploma Program
NRS	National Reporting System
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy
RAEN	Regional Adult Education Network
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

New York State Education Department (NYSED) will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible Title II providers by releasing a competitive five-year request for proposal. All eligible providers will receive the contract announcement and proposal procedure through broad dissemination to stakeholders, the State register, outreach through seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers, all Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), associations such as New York State Association for Continuing and Community Education, State incarcerated associations, the NYSED website and websites of vendors. NYSED funds the most diverse adult education system in the country (Local Education Agencies (schools and BOCES), community colleges, unions, community-based organizations, three (3) library systems), and will continue to support a diverse system meeting all eligibility requirements expected under the direct and equitable requirements of WIOA.

NYSED will continue to support major State leadership investments and adapt them to WIOA requirements.

The seven (7) RAEN centers will provide high quality professional development to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231 (b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction; instruction related to the needs of adult learners; and dissemination about models and promising practices, including career pathways and bridge programs.

Each of the seven (7) RAENs will work with NYSED/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) staff, the designated Title II provider on each LWDB, and other funded programs in the Local Workforce Development Area to ensure a constant and timely input on workforce development policy, and implementation and dissemination of information to funded Title II providers.

The RAEN centers are funded to be instrumental in the alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and Career Center partners and support the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. In partnership with NYSED/ACCES-AEPP regional staff and the National Reporting System (NRS) accountability specialist, the RAENs will provide the technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under Title II as outlined in Section 223 (C), and support the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices in NYS as required by section 223 (D).

1. RAEN centers are funded to provide turn-key training to 3,076 adult education teachers on aligning adult education instruction with rigorous academic standards approved by the NYS Board of Regents through professional development provided through NYSED/City University of New York (CUNY) developed Teacher Leader Institutes; the filming of effective College and Career Readiness Standards instructional modules based on the CUNY training; support for the peer review instructional process; and effective use of adult education teacher websites http://www.TeachingtothecoreNY.org and https://www.collectedny.org/.
2. Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) NRS Student Data and Reporting System: ASISTS is the State performance Management Information System operated by the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC). Since WIOA accountability and reporting requirements were defined in final regulations and agreements reached for data reporting with NYSDOL, NYSED will work with the New York City LAC to change ASISTS to meet WIOA requirements. It will still be used for State-specific needs such as Employment Preparation Education state aid claims, corrective action, report cards, and diagnostic information for High School Equivalency (HSE) test takers.
3. National External Diploma Program (NEDP): NYSED/ACCES-AEPP works in collaboration with the NYSED/HSE office to facilitate one (1) of the four (4) pathways to an HSE diploma. NEDP is a non-traditional experiential adult learning assessment program which serves as an alternative pathway to high school credentialing. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP funded programs that have received approval to run an NEDP program by the HSE office may also request funding authorization from the NYSED/ACCES-AEPP office.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Acronym List for Section III.b.5.C.	
NEDP	National External Diploma Program
NYS	New York State
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
Pre-ETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

Title IV

New York State (NYS) has two (2) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies; Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB) and New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR).

WIOA Title IV VR Program funds received by OCFS/NYSCB are used to provide services to eligible individuals in accordance with an Individualized Plan for Employment. Funds are also used to provide diagnostic services to assist in determining eligibility for services. OCFS/NYSCB established three (3) outcome-based contracts for the provision of these services:

1. Comprehensive services;
2. Vocational evaluation/job placement services; and
3. Assistive technology services.

Contractors provide agreed upon assessment and training services within a specific geographic area. If an individual's needs call for specialized services outside the scope of these three (3) contracts, or where there is no service available in a geographic area, OCFS/NYSCB district offices purchase services from other providers. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB district offices receive allocation to purchase other allowable services such as college training, medical evaluations, and low vision evaluations and devices. Fifteen percent of Title IV funds are reserved to provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. OCFS/NYSCB also receives Title VI, Part B funds for the provision of supported employment services for individuals who meet the definition of "most significantly disabled."

NYSED/ACCES-VR uses Section 110 funds to provide WIOA Title IV VR services. Fifteen percent of these funds are devoted to Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. A combination of Title VI, Part B and Section 110 funds will be used to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. OCFS/NYSCB has asked RSA to de-obligate and re-obligate its Title VI supported employment funds to NYSED/ACCES-VR for the general VR agency to provide supported employment services to individuals with most significant disabilities, including youth with most significant disabilities. Title VI, Part B funds typically represent less than 6% of the total funds NYSED/ACCES-VR uses for intensive supported employment services.

NYSED/ACCES-VR maintains agreements with other State agencies for ongoing coordination of the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services. NYSED/ACCES-VR provides extended services, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for up to four (4) years, or until the youth turns 25 years old and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever comes first. NYSED/ACCES-VR contracts with vendors in a performance-based contracting system with payments being based on the attainment of specific milestones and outcomes for supported employment. Program performance and costs are reviewed at least annually. Service re-negotiations occur based on overall performance, including performance on projected outcomes agreed to by NYSED/ACCES-VR and the vendor.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data

systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

i. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Program Data

WIOA performance reporting seeks to improve accountability across all core programs by requiring reporting on a set of uniform measures. The core programs are required to regularly report to the federal government and to the public on program performance, to ensure the System is accountable and transparent in the pursuit of New York State's (NYS's) workforce vision and goals. The core programs updated their case management systems to collect the data elements required by WIOA in Program Year 2017 and have since updated data entry policy to include the requirements. This data collection has facilitated the ability to consistently set accurate performance goals and inform performance negotiations. WIOA Title II and IV program staff continues to gather the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures. Additionally, the core programs have established data sharing agreements for the programs that do not have access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data. Both Titles II and IV have UI wage data Memorandums of Understanding in place and have access to State Wage Interchange System data. Baseline performance has now been established based on data collected over the past few years.

Data Alignment

NYS recognizes that aligning and integrating workforce and education data is important to fulfill the goals of WIOA. However, this is a difficult task that will take many resources and time to achieve. To begin the process, NYS established a Data Integration Workgroup as a sub-workgroup to the WIOA Interagency Team. The workgroup meets regularly and has identified the primary steps to achieve alignment and integration. The Title I, Title III, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and UI program data is already integrated in OSOS; therefore, NYS will continue to focus on how to align and integrate with the Title II and Title IV programs.

The Data Integration Workgroup began by creating a gap analysis for WIOA compliance, evaluating the current systems, and reviewing the combined/joint Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) reporting requirements. The core programs then worked with their respective vendors to update existing systems to be compliant with WIOA data collection and reporting requirements. However, this will be an ongoing process as the federal Departments continue to update requirements and release additional policy.

The workgroup identified some of the obstacles to overcome in the move towards alignment and integration. These include, but are not limited to, awaiting guidance from the federal Departments regarding the level of integration; the specific data required; common enrollments and common exits; fiscal data integration; confidentiality of customer information; meeting NYS requirements and integration with other systems such as the Statewide Financial System (SFS) and Office of Mental Health/New York Employment Services System (OMH/NYESS); funding for alignment and integration and for future maintenance and system modernization costs; and the different stages of each agency's systems.

Considering these obstacles, the Data Integration Workgroup has made strides by implementing data sharing agreements among core partners and determined that the most feasible level of integration would be to either purchase or internally develop a data warehouse. The WIOA partners would load their program data into the warehouse at regular intervals and the warehouse could be used to integrate reporting across the core programs. Achieving even this level of integration will present unique challenges, including developing methods for identifying and combining records for common participants without a common unique identifier. The Data Integration Workgroup agrees that to share participant data and avoid duplication of services across titles, a shared unique identifier must be established for each participant. The workgroup will continue to discuss potential methods for achieving this goal as well as researching the solutions other states have implemented. The NYS partners believe the federal agencies understand that integrated reporting is a long-term goal as they have not provided a deadline for integrated reporting.

NYS uses quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability for Title I, Title III, and TAA programs under WIOA. NYS developed and executed UI wage data sharing agreements with the Title II and Title IV programs to align with federal requirements. NYS follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended; WIOA; NYS Labor Law §537; 20 CFR Part 603; and applicable Departmental regulations.

Going forward, NYS will continue to take advantage of grant funding made available for data system alignment and integration, as well as opportunities for technical assistance from the federal agencies.

ii. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

New York State (NYS) recognizes that aligning and integrating workforce and education data is important to fulfill the goals of WIOA. However, this is a difficult task that will take many resources and time to achieve. To begin the process, NYS established a Data Integration Workgroup as a sub-workgroup to the WIOA Interagency Team. The workgroup meets regularly and has identified the primary steps to achieve alignment and integration. The Title I, Title III, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Unemployment Insurance program data is already integrated in OSOS; therefore, NYS will continue to focus on how to align and integrate with the Title II and Title IV programs. In late 2025, New York State Department of Labor, New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Education Program and Policy, Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind also amended existing Memorandums of Understanding to be able to share information needed to create a unified report for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance measure.

All title partners have signed the State Wage Interchange System agreement as Access Performance Accountability and Customer Information Agencies. This will allow the workgroup to develop plans that will better facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery.

iii. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

As the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) continues to move toward full reconstitution, it is also working toward compliance with all its functions, including assisting the Governor to align technology and data systems. Prior to SWIB reconstitution, the core programs were working together through the WIOA Interagency Team's Data Integration Workgroup to discuss alignment and the various obstacles to overcome in working towards that alignment and integration. Now that the committees are formed, they are working with New York State Department of Labor /Policy, Strategy and Research and the Program Implementation and Performance Unit to learn more about the challenges the State has had in aligning technology and data systems and will work to determine recommendations for the Data Integration Workgroup and the Governor.

To make data more transparent and available Statewide, a public facing dashboard of WIOA Title I and Title III programs was released in February 2025, with data updated quarterly. The dashboard allows users to self-serve and explore the WIOA program performance data based on multiple criteria.

One of the main ways the partner programs currently ensure excellent service delivery and avoid duplication is through the State's joint policy on referrals, allowing partners to share participant information with each other as long as they have the participant's written consent. This was originally intended just for referrals between core partners but has since expanded to include other partner programs. Periodic training to the System is provided on this process to ensure all frontline staff is aware of the policy and what is and is not allowable when making referrals.

Use of the State's primary case management system, OSOS, has also recently been expanded through the State agencies and educational institutions participating in Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development's funding opportunities. Participant data for all of these programs is entered into OSOS as a common intake and reporting system.

Though it may not be feasible to fully align all the State's data systems at this time, as the work of the SWIB committees moves forward and intersects with the Data Integration Workgroup, the two (2) entities will develop recommendations for doing so, ensuring the best service delivery possible to participants, particularly for those who are unemployed.

iv. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) provides quarterly performance reports in accordance with Section 116 of WIOA. These reports include negotiated goals as well as cumulative information for the Program Year on participants, exiters, Q2 and Q4 employment rates, median earnings, credential attainment, Measurable Skill Gains, and Adult Priority of Service data for each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) and New York State. NYSDOL also provides ad-hoc reports for self-evaluation at the request of LWDAs. These reports allow the LWDA to keep track of its progress and highlight any areas that may need attention before they become a problem and allow NYSDOL to see which areas are successful and which areas may need assistance. If an area looks like it may fail to reach its goals, NYSDOL will reach out to determine if technical assistance or training could help. If an area is successful, NYSDOL will reach out to document best practices. These best practices are shared through training and regular meetings with Local Workforce Development Board directors.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

The federal government uses the primary indicators of performance as the main assessment of the effectiveness of the New York State (NYS) workforce development System. NYS developed multiple webinars and provided technical assistance to local areas to increase performance and ensure goals are met. In addition, NYS continues to improve intermediary performance indicators designed to support the primary indicators and System goals. These intermediary indicators improve communication between System partners and influence the behavior of frontline staff in NYS Career Centers to improve services to participants as needed. NYS has had success with intermediary indicators in the past and will continue to develop tools to support and improve services provided by the NYS System. NYS will also continue to conduct analysis and develop intermediary reports based on the primary indicators of performance.

Regarding Title II, attached in Table 2 of Appendix 2, are the performance targets approved by the USED's Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) for 2024-2025. New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP) will continue to refine Measurable Skill Gains targets, including definitions of measures and approved assessments for individuals with barriers to employment "who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers." Addressing barriers to employment have been prioritized with our case management services. Data is reviewed and a gap analysis has been constructed to target areas of concern.

NYSED/ACCES-AEPP will also continue to comply with WIOA requirements. This includes surveying all students in the 2nd and 4th quarters after their exit quarter. The NYSED/ACCES-AEPP electronic data management system continues to be hard-wired to exit students after 90 consecutive days of no activity. In addition to manual surveying done at the local program level, NYSED/ACCES-AEPP continues to support a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) to conduct a data exchange with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database and the NYSED reporting system to identify employment, wage outcomes, and effectiveness to employment. Seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers and the National Reporting System (NRS) Accountability Office, both funded with WIOA leadership funds, are mounting professional development and technical assistance for agencies that were WIOA-funded beginning July 1, 2022. The federal office sets the reporting deadline for NRS state data to August 15th annually. NYSED/ACCES-AEPP has taken steps to comply with all required deadlines.

NYSED/ACCES-VR and NYSDOL have an MOU for the sharing of UI wage data for participants that NYSED/ACCES-VR reports quarterly in the RSA-911. The UI wage information provides data on the retention of employment during the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit by each participant. Additionally, all information reported in the WIOA Annual Report is shared with the WIOA State partners.

To further support the collection and reporting of attained credentials, NYSED/ACCES-VR has updated its contracts with vocational training vendors and colleges, requiring them to document credential attainment.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

New York State (NYS) uses quarterly Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records for performance accountability for Title I, Title III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs under WIOA. NYS developed and executed UI wage data sharing agreements with the Title II and Title IV programs to align with federal requirements.

In accordance with the executed UI wage data sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) and New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL), Title II and Title IV partners securely transmit a match file of their WIOA participants to NYSDOL on a quarterly basis and NYSDOL securely transmits the wages for their participants back to them.

For both the Title II and Title IV partners, the wage data can be used solely for the measurement of WIOA performance. While other states can use UI wage data for workforce and Labor Market Information, NYS Labor Law §537 only allows the data from the UI program to be used for WIOA performance measures, evaluation of program performance, financial or other analysis required by law, preparation of reports required by law, operation of public programs for the purpose of improving the quality or delivery of program services, establishment of common case management systems, or creating operational efficiencies.

Under the MOU, NYSED/ACCES-VR reports UI wage data for participants quarterly in the RSA-911 on the retention of employment during the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit by each participant. Additionally, all information reported in the WIOA Annual Report is shared with the WIOA State partners.

To further support the collection and reporting of attained credentials, NYSED/ACCES-VR has updated its contracts with vocational training vendors and colleges, requiring them to document credential attainment.

Title II uses UI wage data to assess whether funded programs are reaching benchmarks and goals. This data is also used to identify programs that need technical assistance to improve outcomes.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

NYS follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended; WIOA; NYS Labor Law §537; 20 CFR Part 603; and applicable Departmental regulations.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Acronym List for Section III.b.7.A-C.	
DVOP	Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists
ICS	Individualized Career Services
IEP	Individual Employment Plan

JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grants
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
TA	Technical Advisory
TSMs	Transitioning Service Members
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VSEF	Veteran Services Eligibility Form
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) Veterans' Program has specialized staff that are dedicated to helping eligible veterans and eligible spouses gain a competitive edge in today's labor market. Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority services in all NYS employment and training programs for which they are eligible and qualified. This priority of service is provided in accordance with 4215 of 38 U.S.C. in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by USDOL.

NYSDOL established a veterans' priority of service policy (TA #12-12.5) for the use of self-service resources and staff assisted services. Priority of service means that veterans and eligible spouses are given priority over other customers for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under a qualified job training program. A veteran or an eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier in time than other customers or, if the resource is limited, the veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the jobs or training for which they are eligible and qualified instead of the other customer.

At the point of eligibility determination and enrollment, if a veteran or eligible spouse does not have documentation verifying their eligibility for priority of service, they are afforded access on a priority basis to all services provided by program staff, including Individualized Career Services (ICS) while awaiting verification.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

NYSDOL performs on-site visits to Career Centers to monitor veterans' priority of service. NYSDOL policy was established to ensure Career Center professional staff is proficient in accurately recording veteran and eligible spouse status in the OSOS case management system. If a veteran or eligible spouse customer enters through a partner organization serving veterans, that organization can utilize OSOS to support priority of service to their customer base.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

For veterans' priority of service to be implemented successfully, NYSDOL recognizes that veteran and eligible spouse identification plays a pivotal role. Career Center staff are trained to ask about

veteran and eligible spouse status at intake. If an individual self-identifies as a veteran or an eligible spouse at the Career Center, that individual is scheduled with the next available staff person.

When a veteran or eligible spouse undergoes eligibility determination for enrollment (i.e., in WIOA Adult programs), staff initiate verification of veteran or eligible spouse status. This is accomplished with administration of the Veteran Services Eligibility Form (VSEF).

Career Center staff complete the VSEF with every customer who identifies as a veteran or eligible spouse, regardless of the service delivery program under which the customer is served. The VSEF is used to determine if the customer belongs to a priority group or has an employment barrier and is eligible to meet with a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) specialist. Customers are notified that the information is being requested on a voluntary basis; that it will be kept confidential; that refusal to provide it will not subject them to any adverse treatment; and that it will be used only in accordance with law.

Eligible veteran and eligible spouse job seekers collecting Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, who are not work search exempt, are scheduled to attend individual appointments for reemployment services with the Career Center staff. For Career Centers that have DVOP specialist coverage, and when characteristic information is available in OSOS indicating the customer is DVOP eligible, the customer is scheduled first from the UI weekly pools to meet with the DVOP specialist to receive services.

When an eligible veteran or eligible spouse being served under another service delivery model is assessed as DVOP eligible, staff refers the customer to the DVOP specialist, if that office has DVOP coverage. If the customer is determined ineligible for DVOP services, or a Career Center does not have an available DVOP specialist, the customer continues receiving one-on-one services from Career Center staff.

For walk-in veteran and eligible spouse customers not collecting UI, Career Center staff use the VSEF to determine DVOP specialist eligibility. Customers eligible for DVOP services are referred to the DVOP specialist if that office has DVOP coverage. If the customer is determined ineligible for DVOP services, or a Career Center DVOP specialist is not available, the customer receives one-on-one services from Career Center staff.

TA #23-06.1: Initial Assessment in the Career Center System, requires that all Career Center customers, including veterans and eligible spouses with an employment barrier, be provided an Initial Assessment. The Initial Assessment process first identifies any individual barriers to employment. If barriers exist, the customer is provided with an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). If no barriers exist, the customer's employment goal is evaluated. If the knowledge, skills, strengths, and abilities are deficient to meet the customer's employment goal, or if the employment goal does not suit the local labor market, the customer is provided with an IEP.

If deemed appropriate for a veteran or eligible spouse, the Comprehensive Assessment can include an in-depth, formal, structured interview. Tools such as Job Zone's Interest Inventory, Ability Profiler or Skills Profiler may also be used to help the customer determine employment goals. Once the local labor market is reviewed and an employment goal is determined, an IEP will be developed. The plan will include a long-term goal, short-term goals (if appropriate), and steps to meet the goal(s). Referral to supportive services (including needs related payments) may be necessary to assist the customer in overcoming barriers or to utilize additional benefits to further their education and/or careers. If a DVOP specialist is not available, other Career Center staff members will provide priority of service to these customers.

The U.S. Secretary of Labor, through the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, has identified certain categories of veterans most in need of ICS to mitigate their barriers to employment. Eligible veterans or eligible spouses with qualifying employment barriers, Transitioning Service Members (TSMs), wounded, ill or injured military members receiving treatment and their spouses or caregivers remain the highest priority. The following populations of eligible veterans or eligible spouses are considered to have a qualifying employment barrier and must be targeted for service:

- Individuals with disabilities including special disabled or disabled veterans;
- Homeless individuals;
- Vietnam-era veterans;
- Recently separated service members;
- Those referred for employment services by the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Justice-involved individuals;
- Those between the ages of 18-24;
- Individuals lacking a high school diploma or high school equivalent certificate; and
- Economically disadvantaged individuals.

NYS implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring eligible veterans and eligible spouses with a qualifying employment barrier to career services provided by the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program DVOP specialist.

In addition to NYSDOL's website, all Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are advised to ensure that their websites include language advising visitors of the veterans' priority of service policy. Language alerting users to veterans' priority of service is also included in any self-registration processes. All LWDBs must include the veterans' priority of service provision in their contract template, requests for proposals, and sub-agreement language.

For additional details on NYSDOL services to veterans, view the NYS JVSG PY 2024-2027 State Plan.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Acronym List for Section III.b.8	
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CDO	Office of the Chief Disability Officer
DEI	Disability Employment Initiative
DRC	Disability Resource Coordinator
ETM	Employment Transition Model
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area

LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-VR	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation
NYSED/OSEA	New York State Education Department/Office of Special Education and ACCES
NY SCION	New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network
OCFS/NYSCB	Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind
ODEP	Office of Disability Employment Policy
OMH	Office of Mental Health
PROMISE	Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TA	Technical Advisory
USDOL/ETA	United States Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Y&YAD	youth and young adults with disabilities

TA #18-01.1: New York State One-Stop Career Center Certification, was re-issued in 2023 to establish State policy for certifying One-Stop Career Centers under WIOA. WIOA requires the certification to address three (3) criteria:

1. Accessibility (physical and programmatic);
2. Effectiveness of the network; and
3. Continuous Improvement of One-Stop Centers and delivery systems.

On-site evaluations include completing an assessment that consists of required standards and enhanced standards that evaluate the three (3) criteria listed above. Some of the required components include ensuring that the Career Center is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and ensuring emergency evacuation procedures are in place and address the needs of individuals with disabilities. Some of the enhancement components include verification that adaptive technology is available in the Resource Room for customers with disabilities and that Center-based and virtual services and resources are available for individuals with disabilities.

The New York Employment Transition Model Demonstration Grant (NY ETM) "DreamLink NY"

USDOL/ETA and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) awarded New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) a five (5)-year Employment Transition Model (ETM) Demonstration Grant to develop strategies to assist youth and young adults with disabilities (ages 14-24) — particularly in underserved communities — in successfully transitioning into the workforce.

The primary goals of the ETM Demonstration Grants are to improve the employment outcomes of multiply marginalized people with disabilities, specifically youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD), as well as to increase states' capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved Y&YAD and their families.

Under this project, called "DreamLink NY," NYSDOL has partnered with Office of Mental Health (OMH), New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR), and NYSED/Office of Special Education and ACCES (NYSED/OSEA). Together, the agencies are implementing an intervention model based on lessons learned under the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) Federal initiative. This model relies on key project staff placed in four (4) Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs): Capital Region, Hempstead/Long Beach, Monroe, and Columbia/Greene. Youth Access Coordinators (Dream Navigators) will be the primary engager and provider of connecting activities to Y&YAD enrolled in the project. Outreach and Engagement Specialists (Dream Connectors) will be responsible for the continuous engagement of the community to ensure enrollment targets are met and that enrollment occurs in underserved places to engage more multiply marginalized groups.

With a five (5)-year period of performance that began on April 1, 2024, the project is still in the start-up phase. Important elements include youth and family engagement; youth and family needs assessment and planning; basic needs fulfillment; education and transition; WIOA training and support services; career pathways and employment; financial empowerment; youth leadership; mental health, trauma, and crisis management; and culturally responsive approaches.

The evaluation component of this demonstration grant is outlined in section III.b.4.C. of this Plan.

The New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION)

On October 21, 2021, the Governor announced a commitment of $11.1M in federal workforce development funding through 2024 to expand the already successful network of Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) to all 33 LWDAs, a total of 27 LWDAs are participating to increase the capacity of their service delivery and better serve individuals with disabilities. In April 2023, this financial commitment was extended through 2026.

NY SCION builds upon the work of four (4) rounds of federal Disability Employment Initiative and Disability Program Navigator funding implemented in NYS. These two (2) initiatives sought to improve education, training and employment opportunities, and outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities, including those receiving Social Security disability benefits. NY SCION does the same, taken to scale in nearly every LWDA across NYS.

DRCs are specialized staff that work to change local workforce systems to better serve individuals with disabilities. The intention of DRCs supporting each local area is to increase compliance under WIOA section 188 and applicable provisions under the ADA. Additionally, under NY SCION, DRCs:

- Increase the capacity of the Career Center and surrounding career pathways programs to serve individuals with disabilities;
- Identify and leverage disability-related resources and partners, including NYSED/ACCES-VR and Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB), to support collaboration around a job seeker's employment and/or training goal(s);
- Advise the System on how to effectively promote the participation of individuals with disabilities in existing career pathways systems and programs;
- Assist and train Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), Career Center staff, businesses, community colleges, and training providers on such topics as rights under the

ADA, Social Security Administration (SSA) work incentives, accommodations, assistive technology, and assessments;

- Coordinate with career pathway programs' direct service delivery staff, including career coaches;
- Assist in the recruitment of individuals with disabilities, including SSA beneficiaries, to participate in career pathways programs, including funded career pathways training, and to utilize Career Center services;
- Identify career, training, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities using assessments;
- Obtain and maintain a credential to provide benefits advisement and work incentive counseling to job seekers in receipt of SSA benefits (e.g., Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI));
- Help ensure that individuals with disabilities access the programs and services they need, including career and training services offered through the Career Centers, to participate in existing career pathways programs; and
- Facilitate an effective approach to leverage resources needed for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in existing career pathway programs and to achieve their employment and/or training goal(s).

Other efforts to improve accessibility of services to individuals with disabilities under NY SCION include:

- Update of JAWS/ZoomText Fusion Pro that was distributed to all NYS Career Centers in 2023;
- A Disability Employment Summit where DRCs, WIOA Interagency Partners, LWDB partners, and other stakeholders convened to discuss best practices and the sustainability of NY SCION funding; and
- Regular trainings to the System, partners, and NYSDOL staff. Recent trainings include topics such as digital accessibility and ABLE accounts.

NYS's Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO)

Established in February 2022 by Governor Kathy Hochul, the Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO) advocates on behalf of people with disabilities. The CDO works to break down silos between NYS agencies that provide services to people with disabilities; pushes for progress on Statewide accessibility issues; provides a disability perspective on policy proposals, legislation, and NYS agency operations; and diligently connects with communities and advocates on a wide spectrum of disability issues.

The CDO's aggressive initiatives include:

- Employment First – Governor Hochul signed Executive Order No. 40 establishing NYS as an Employment First (E1st) State in 2024. E1st is a national movement built upon the principle that employment should be the first and preferred option for people being served by our disability public health system, and that Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) be not just a primary goal, but an expectation, even for those with the most significant disabilities. E1st is a civil rights, economic, public health, and workforce issue that requires deep public policy, cultural, social, and economic progress to become a reality.

- State as a Model Employer (SAME) – Governor Hochul signed Executive Order No. 31 committing NYS to Becoming a Model Employer for People With Disabilities in 2023. SAME commits each State agency, in collaboration with the CDO, to develop an annual plan that details the steps the agency will take to improve the hiring of people with disabilities and disability inclusiveness, as well as improve the percentage of people with disabilities hired at each agency.
- Most Integrated Settings Coordination Council (MISCC) – The MISCC is a cross-systems partnership consisting of representatives from multiple NYS agencies and nine (9) appointed public representatives with an interest in ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages with physical, intellectual, developmental, sensory, and mental health disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their individual needs. Together, these representatives and agencies, in partnership and collaboration with public advocates and community-based partners, are working hard to ensure that all New Yorkers with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to live lives of inclusion where people live, work, travel, and engage in their community. Updating the NYS 2013 Olmstead Plan and producing annual iterations is a focus of the CDO and the MISCC's work.
- NYS's Olmstead Plan – CDO is drafting an update to NYS's Olmstead Plan, which is being informed by several committees, including the Employment Subcommittee. Appointed stakeholders are drafting goals specifically aimed at the employment and economic domain of Olmstead and will be aligned with E1st work. The work of the MISCC also aligns with the goals and priorities of E1st due to its emphasis on CIE. This committee, which is comprised of various NYS agency representatives and private sector advocates, will provide recommendations to the MISCC in accomplishing its goals and objectives related to employment.
- Disability Rights and Employment Awareness Month (DREAM) Symposium – The CDO, in partnership with co-sponsoring agencies, leads the annual DREAM event in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) to acknowledge the rights that people with disabilities are entitled to, celebrate the extreme value disabled New Yorkers bring to the workforce, and assist in matching prospective qualified candidates with employers.
- Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) – Building on the successful program developed in partnership with Advocacy, Humanity, Reimagination, and Change (AHRC) New York City; the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities; and NYSED/ACCES-VR, the Statewide PII advances NYS's goal of becoming a model employer by creating internship opportunities in NYS agencies for individuals with disabilities that may lead to long-term employment. As of October 14, 2025, 13 interns have been successfully placed leading to two (2) permanent hires in NYS employment.
- The Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Office (DDBHHO) – DDBHHO was established by Governor Hochul in January 2024. Christopher Woodfill was appointed Executive Director and Rachel Cahill was appointed as Chris' American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, assistant, and access advocate. DDBHHO is an integral part of the CDO team. The office focuses on three (3) primary priorities:
    1. Access to language;
    2. Access to communication; and
    3. Access to information for the DDBHH communities.

- Interagency Coordinating Council on Services to Persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (IAC) – IAC was signed into law in 2007, fully established in 2009, and operated until 2013 when it went inactive. It is currently being re-established and will be the primary vehicle for the DDBHH communities to have their voices heard and acted upon in NYS government, including in areas related to employment and economic outcomes.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

Acronym List for Section III.b.9	
LEP	Limited English Proficient
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSED/ACCES-AEPP	New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
TA	Technical Advisory
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VRI	Video Remote Interpreting
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The New York State (NYS) One-Stop Delivery System, One-Stop Operators ("System Operators"), and One-Stop partners use Language Access to connect all people, including those who are English language learners, to ensure they have full participation in all programs and services. Language Access means providing individuals who are English language learners access to the same services provided to English speakers, but in their language of origin.

Executive Order No. 26 established NYS's first Statewide language access policy which requires the following:

- Translation of vital documents in the most common non-English languages spoken by English language learners; and
- Interpreters so English language learners and New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) staff can actively communicate in spoken interactions.

Accessibility is an important component within the System. NYS assures that all partners described in this Plan recognize the importance of the physical, programmatic, and communication accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and English language learners in the Career Centers. The required NYS Non-Discrimination Plan, revised in February 2020, reflects WIOA Section 188 regulations related to accessibility non-discrimination.

TA #16-04.1: Universal Accessibility of the Workforce Development System to Individuals with Disabilities, was updated in January 2022. This TA includes updated information referencing "Promising Practices in Achieving Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability

Reference Guide." USDOL developed this guide to provide the System with promising practices that correlate with specific nondiscrimination requirements in Section 188.

In 2021, Executive Order No. 26.1: Statewide Language Access Policy was issued, requiring all NYS agencies to provide language assistance services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals, including interpretation and translation. Agency staff is required to complete language access training each year, and posters are featured in each Career Center to notify customers of the availability of language assistance services.

TA #17-02.2: Language Interpretation Services Available at Career Centers, was updated in January 2022 and requires certain actions to ensure individuals with language barriers receive the language assistance necessary to afford them meaningful access to all programs, services, and information within the One-Stop Career Center System free of charge. Career Centers receive instructions on how to access and utilize the vendors to provide interpreting services when needed. The following services are available to Career Center customers:

- Over the phone interpreters;
- Consecutive Interpreters (in-person oral interpretation and/or written translation);
- Sign language interpreters; and
- Video Remote Interpreting (VRI).

Career Center staff can also utilize available bilingual staff and "language banks" of volunteers who are fluent and able to interpret/translate in other languages.

A Language Access Plan is required of all NYS agencies, and a Language Access Coordinator must be identified to oversee the plan. Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, NYSDOL chose to translate all vital documents into the most common non-English languages spoken in NYS. These languages are Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Yiddish. Determination of what documents are considered vital is based on the Language Assistance Guide issued by the U.S. Department of Justice. Vital written documents include, but are not limited to, consent and complaint forms; intake and application forms with the potential for important consequences; written notices of rights; notices of denials, losses, or decreases in benefits or services; notices of disciplinary action; signs; and notices advising LEP individuals of free language assistance services.

For customers utilizing online resources at the NYSDOL's website, all accessibility-related issues are addressed on the NYSDOL Programs and Tools for Workforce Professionals webpage.

Career Centers can also make referrals to the Literacy Zones for English language learners. The Literacy Zone is a reform initiative to close the achievement gap in urban and rural communities of concentrated poverty and high concentrations of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency all provided by Title II New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (NYSED/ACCES-AEPP). Literacy Zones provide a systemic approach to meeting the literacy needs of these communities characterized by significant poverty and deficits in literacy and English language proficiency. Geographically defined as one (1) or more adjacent census tracts using the US Census Bureau data, NYSED has identified 67 Literacy Zones across NYS. Each Literacy Zone can provide pathways out of poverty for individuals and families, in the following areas:

- A continuum of literacy from early childhood through adult, including strong support for parents' involvement in their children's literacy development at home and engagement with the school system;
- Assistance and support for Out-of-School Youth (OSY) to enable them to complete high school and succeed in postsecondary education or advanced training;
- Postsecondary transition that enables OSY and adults to obtain a High School Equivalency diploma and succeed in postsecondary education;
- Support services that enable OSY and adults who are receiving public assistance, or families with incomes of less than 200% of poverty, to obtain and retain employment;
- Transition programs for youth and adults returning to the community from incarceration;
- Pathways to citizenship and English language proficiency for limited English language adults;
- Workforce development programs, including Registered Apprenticeship, Career and Technical Education, and career pathways;
- Support for mature workers and senior citizens to enable them to stay out of poverty;
- Support for individuals with disabilities and their families; and
- Transition support for returning veterans and their families, including disabled veterans.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Acronym List for Section IV	
DW	Dislocated Worker
ICS	Individualized Career Services
LMI	Labor Market Information
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NEG	National Emergency Grant
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL/OWD	New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development
NYSDOL/UID	New York State Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance Division
OSOS	One-Stop Operating System
RRRC	Regional Rapid Response Coordinator
TA	Technical Advisory
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAARA	Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act
TRA	Trade Readjustment Assistance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WARN	Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

The primary goal of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is to assist trade-affected workers in locating and preparing for suitable re-employment as rapidly and effectively as possible. In New York State (NYS), this is accomplished through:

- Identifying businesses that are trade-affected;
- Timely provision of Rapid Response services;
- Effective case management through the provision of various basic and Individualized Career Services (ICS) in the Career Center as a co-enrolled participant under the WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW) Program, in addition to TAA-specific services provided by State merit staff; and
- Focusing on re-training workers determined to need further skills to obtain employment in emerging and in-demand occupations.

TAA coordination with WIOA and Wagner-Peyser

It is the goal of NYS to ensure that DWs, including trade-certified workers, receive services available through the One-Stop Career Center System to ensure rapid reattachment to the workforce through attainment of suitable employment. Further, NYS determined that individuals eligible for services under TAA programs are best served through Career Center offices operating in Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). NYS previously adopted TA #21-03 to ensure all TAA customers are co-enrolled as DWs and are provided the same set of basic and individualized career services available to all customers in the System. This co-enrollment, which is required by Federal Regulations, allows trade-affected customers to take advantage of the reemployment, assessment, Labor Market Information (LMI), career advisement, case management, and follow-up services available through the local One-Stop Career Center System. In NYS, WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded staff and services are functionally aligned within each of our local Career Center offices. This allows services to be provided to TAA customers in a seamless and efficient manner. Trade-funded services delivered by State merit staff can be layered on top of WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded services already provided through the Career Center. NYSDOL allocated sufficient resources to each LWDA to support outreach (including Rapid Response services), orientation, case management, job development, and follow-up services for DWs eligible for TAA benefits.

TAA Employment Counselors

New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) employs a small team of Senior Employment Counselors and Employment Counselors devoted to engaging and serving TAA potentially eligible and TAA eligible workers throughout NYS. The addition of these staff to our Central Office purview assists with continuous case management and career development and career counseling, improving quality of service, increasing the number of customers completing training, referrals to supportive services, and follow-up services available through partner programs. All TAA Employment Counselors are located within Career Centers and are assigned regional catchment areas. As part of the NYS System, TAA Employment Counselors coordinate with Rapid Response and give Career Center staff a close contact providing familiarization with the TAA program.

TAA and Rapid Response

The NYSDOL/OWD Rapid Response Program involves planning and delivery of reemployment services for affected workers prior to a mass layoff or business closure. Rapid Response services are initiated when separations meet the NYS Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act thresholds, and/or when a Trade petition is submitted to USDOL.

In NYS, ten (10) regional Rapid Response Teams, attached to Business Engagement, impact the TAA program. When a WARN notice is filed, the Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) attempts

to contact the business within two (2) days of receipt of the WARN. If the business is not TAA certified, and fact finding indicates trade implications prompting the layoff/closure, the RRRC will assist the business with filing the TAA petition or will file directly on behalf of the affected workers. Similar action is taken when a layoff/closure does not trigger the WARN thresholds and the RRRC becomes aware through business intelligence. For businesses that are already TAA certified, the Rapid Response team provides workers with an introduction to the benefits and services available under TAA and guides them to the local career planner for help with accessing benefits. Also, when NYS receives notice from USDOL that a new TAA petition is filed, the Statewide Trade Act Coordinator alerts the System, activating Rapid Response services.

The Rapid Response Team conducts onsite and virtual customized service orientations for workers, covering reemployment services, NYS public health care enrollment options, and if applicable, an overview of TAA benefits and the TAA individual eligibility process. All attendees of the Rapid Response orientation are registered in OSOS immediately following the orientation session. Both the business and attached affected workers are coded with a Rapid Response Event Number for intensive reemployment services and service tracking purposes.

The RRRC keeps the Statewide Trade Act Coordinator, along with the WARN Unit and key local NYSDOL and System partners, apprised of the status of layoffs. Working with the business, the Rapid Response team develops a service plan.

When the specific trade-affected workers are known, the RRRC advises the business to email the following information directly to the New York State Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance Division (NYSDOL/UID) Benefits Section, to begin the process of determining individual worker eligibility:

- Name of trade-affected worker;
- Social Security number;
- Worker's address;
- Division of the company where the worker was assigned;
- Employment start date;
- Separation date; and
- Reason for separation.

Coordination – Rapid Response, Unemployment Insurance Division, Career Center Network

NYSDOL/UID mails each worker, after layoff, an application for TAA. Applications are evaluated by the NYSDOL/UID and result in an individual determination of eligibility. The NYSDOL/UID uses worker contact information collected by Rapid Response Teams and from the trade-affected company to mail TAA applications to affected workers. The NYSDOL/UID advises the Statewide Trade Act Coordinator on a weekly basis of any applications mailed.

The Statewide Trade Act Coordinator in turn advises key local NYSDOL and System partners, including 33 LWDA TAA Coordinators. The local area TAA Coordinators reach out to the workers to promote the program and urge workers to return their individual eligibility applications to the NYSDOL/UID for review, and to visit the Career Center for case management services.

Case Management

Case management begins with a preliminary assessment of knowledge, skills, interests, strengths, and abilities. This initial assessment – required by Federal regulations – helps identify DWs (including Trade-certified workers) who possess marketable skills needed by local businesses. It may also identify DWs (including Trade-certified workers) who need additional services at a more intensive service level. An on-going comprehensive assessment, based on the current labor market, includes:

- Evaluating aptitudes, abilities (including needs for reasonable accommodation), and work values;
- Identifying transferable skills such as computer, problem solving, time management, and organization;
- Assessing English language proficiency (command of the English language);
- Identifying knowledge of foreign languages that may help an employer;
- Assessing supportive service needs such as childcare or transportation; and
- Evaluating the need for referral to community resources.

Assessment results help determine if the affected worker can return to suitable employment or if training is the appropriate path to reemployment. Career planners, in conjunction with the affected worker, determine one (1) of the following steps:

- Active job search to return to the labor market; or
- Referral to training; classroom, online, One-the Job Training (OJT), or Registered Apprenticeship (RA).

Training

Career planners, working with trade-affected workers, determine when training is appropriate given the workers' capabilities, background, experience, and conditions within the current labor market. In considering training options, the guiding principle is to return trade-affected workers to suitable employment as quickly and as economically as possible. Before submitting a request for training approval to the NYSDOL/OWD State-level TAA Program Unit, local career planners ensure that the required six (6) criteria for approval of training are met. These criteria are:

1. No suitable employment is available to the worker;
2. The worker will benefit from the training;
3. There is reasonable expectation of reemployment following the completion of training;
4. Training is reasonably available;
5. The worker is qualified to undertake and complete the training; and
6. Training is suitable and available at a reasonable cost.

Career planners call upon NYSDOL's network of local labor market analysts; access employment projections on the NYSDOL website; and utilize their own knowledge of the local labor market to assist workers in developing occupational goals. A training program may be approved for an eligible trade-affected worker at any time regardless of their eligibility for UI/Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA). In the event the trade-affected worker exhausts UI and is not eligible for TRA, careful

consideration is paid to the person's ability, based on financial resources, to complete the training program.

Training may not be approved when, all costs being considered, training substantially similar in quality, content, and results can be obtained from another provider at a lower cost within a similar timeframe. The total cost of a training program, in determining reasonableness, includes tuition and related expenses (books, tools, and academic fees), travel or transportation expenses, and subsistence. Training at facilities outside the trade-affected worker's commuting area that involves transportation or subsistence costs that add substantially to the total costs, are not approved if similar training is available locally. Training cannot be approved when the cost is unreasonably high compared to the cost of training workers in similar occupations.

Career planners assist workers in finding training programs of a suitable duration to achieve the desired skill level in the shortest possible time. NYSDOL/OWD informs the NYSDOL/UID of approved training plans using a shared database which tracks dates of training and the associated TRA payments.

Program Process Responsibilities

The TAA program in NYS is co-managed by two (2) NYSDOL Divisions: the NYSDOL/UID Benefits Section, which is responsible for interfacing with the trade-certified businesses and determining individual eligibility and overseeing provision of weekly monetary claim benefits; and the NYSDOL/OWD TAA Program Unit, which provides program oversight to the Career Centers. NYSDOL/UID mails TAA application packets to laid off workers and Threatened Status letters to those identified pre-layoff who are named as trade-affected by the businesses. NYSDOL/UID communicates the list of laid off and threatened workers to NYSDOL/OWD, which in turn communicates with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). LWDBs provide outreach to facilitate the application and entitlement processes. Career Centers begin case management while workers await their determination of eligibility.

The following details program responsibility by NYSDOL division:

- Receive petition to trigger rapid response – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Provide notification to LWDBs of filed Trade petitions – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Provide a legal notice of certification through publication in a local newspaper (outreach) – NYSDOL/UID and NYSDOL Communications Office;
- Notify trade-affected workers of approved Trade certifications, RTAA, and general TAA Program eligibility – NYSDOL/UID;
- Determine individual eligibility to TAA – NYSDOL/UID;
- Pay weekly TRA benefits – NYSDOL/UID;
- Provide orientation to TAA benefits/services – NYSDOL/OWD via Career Centers;
- Approve/deny and revoke waivers from training – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Approve/deny requests for training – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Approve/deny requests for job search and relocation allowances – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Provide regular updates to LWDBs on federal TAA funds, WIOA National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds, and additional assistance funds that may be available to support training for trade-affected workers – NYSDOL/OWD;

- Process hearings and appeals related to determinations and decisions concerning TAA-funded benefits and other services, including the following: TRA; job relocation allowances; job search allowances; subsistence allowances while in training, including certain costs associated with an approved training plan at a provider outside the commuting area, as defined by applicable unemployment insurance law or regulation; and training programs as approved courses of study – NYSDOL/UID;
- Approve the use of a reimbursement method to ensure the adequate oversight and integrity of federal funds made available for TAA-approved training – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Allocate funds to LWDBs for the training cost, job search, and relocation benefits – NYSDOL/OWD;
- Provide required reports to USDOL and others as required by law or regulation – NYSDOL/UID, NYSDOL/OWD, and NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research; and
- Ensure the integrity of data for reports provided to federal agencies as required by law or regulation – NYSDOL/UID, NYSDOL/OWD, and NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research.

Role of LWDBs

LWDBs ensure their strategic planning process includes an analysis of the local labor market to:

- Determine business needs;
- Determine emerging, targeted, and demand occupations;
- Identify employment opportunities, which include those with a potential for career advancement; and
- Identify employer-based training opportunities.

LWDBs set local policies for a TAA service strategy that coordinate various service delivery approaches to:

- Assist DWs eligible for TAA benefits in obtaining suitable employment as an alternative to referral to training;
- Promote the use of WIOA basic and individualized services to support the rapid reattachment to the workforce;
- Refer individuals to prevocational and vocational training in demand and targeted occupations; and
- Assist in job retention and career advancement.

LWDBs ensure that DWs eligible for TAA benefits, who are unable to find suitable employment through WIOA Title I basic services, are co-enrolled in WIOA Title I DW services for referral to WIOA-funded individualized and TAA-funded training services.

Managed Resources

TAA resources are utilized to help support common systems utilized by NYSDOL and the One-Stop Career Center System to provide integrated intake, case management, and reporting for our co-enrolled TAA-impacted customers. This includes OSOS, which for the immediate future, will continue to be used to record services provided to our TAA customers.

PeopleSoft is fiscal accounting software that allows NYSDOL/OWD to track allocations and spending of all programs managed by NYSDOL/OWD, including TAA and WIOA programs. It also allows NYSDOL to generate timely and accurate reports of fiscal activity at both the NYS and local levels.

Trade Act Tracker is a web application database that contains customer information regarding TAA/TRA eligibility and benefits. Individual records for this database are created by the NYSDOL/UID Benefits Section. The database is accessed by the TAA Program Unit as well as NYSDOL/UID for training records and TRA/RTAA payment information. Local level TAA staff have limited access to the database to issue customer waivers. Local level TAA staff can also generate reports regarding eligible workers covered under TAA petitions. The Trade Act Tracker, along with Peoplesoft and OSOS, is utilized by NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research to generate data for federal reporting and will be integrated or interfaced with NYSDOL's UI System Improvement Modernization (UISIM), currently in final stages of development.

The NYSDOL website features a Workforce Governance section serving as a repository for program information used by Career Center professionals. The TAA section of this site houses all TAA program administration forms used by Career Center professionals, in addition to resources such as the TAA Desk Guide, TAA OSOS Desk Guide, TAA FAQ, and other staff capacity building material. Additionally, career planners access employment projections through NYSDOL/Policy, Strategy and Research. The TAA program maintains a customer-facing presence on the website with TAA FAQ, fact sheets, and contact information to assist customers with contacting local TAA coordinators and career planners.

Additional Information: Sunset of Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015; Reversion 2021 Sunset of Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015; and Reversion 2021 Program Operations after June 30, 2022, and Program Termination.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act (TAARA) of 2015 went into effect on June 29, 2015, and sunset on June 30, 2021. Sunset provisions within TAARA authorized the TAA Program to operate for one (1) year, ending on June 30, 2022. The one-year program iteration was named Reversion 2021.

Since Congressional reauthorization did not occur by June 30, 2022, TAA's termination provision went into effect. Under the termination provision a phased termination allows participants who had been individually determined eligible to continue to be served using remaining funding. Those workers who continue to be eligible under the 2015 program are workers who were:

- Part of a worker group certified on or before June 30, 2021; and
- Separated or threatened with separation on or before June 30, 2021.

To be eligible under the 2021 Reversion program a worker must have been:

- Part of a worker group certified on or before June 30, 2022;
- Separated on or before June 30, 2022; and
- Workers separated on or after July 1, 2022, and who have no path to eligibility.

The TAA Program entered phase-out termination on July 1, 2022, meaning that USDOL may no longer certify Petitions for TAA to make additional groups of workers eligible to apply for benefits or training. Thus, the number of new entrants to the program is significantly reduced. States will not receive new funding allocations for Federal Fiscal Year 2023 and beyond.

2020 Update to Federal Program Regulations

New federal regulations, instituted in September 2020, enabled states to expand the service provision strategy to include partner staff in providing TAA specific services. Previously only State merit staff could provide those services. Program termination took effect before NYS could institute changes to the staffing model.

Going Forward: **Program Termination, Staff Capacity Building, and Virtual Services**

As of this writing, the TAA Program is in a state of flux following the program's Phase Out Termination; Congress may act to restore TAA, or the program may reach full termination. With the hiring of regional TAA Employment Counselors, the TAA program in NYS is poised to continue focusing on individualized assessments, continuous case management and appropriate follow up services using federal funds through September 30, 2027.

NYS continues to provide training to all Career Center professionals regarding the benefits of the TAA Program. Training is conducted virtually by the Statewide TAA Coordinator on an as-needed basis targeting proper data entry and quality case management. NYS emphasizes that providing continuous case management services to TAA customers will result in successful outcomes.

In addition to incorporating ever changing technology, which allows virtual meetings and training, NYSDOL's TAA program has revamped many of its forms to include electronic signatures. While still at work on this effort, NYSDOL has successfully converted the Individual Employment Plan, State Level Agreement (training contract), Request for Funds, Training Plan Details, Job Search Application, Relocation Application, and Training Progress Report forms to electronic versions. This enables NYSDOL to offer participants services without requiring in-person contact.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

a. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

Regions and Local Areas

NYS's 33 local areas were designated during the transition from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in accordance with the parameters outlined in the statute. These original local area designations remain intact under WIOA and are provided below within the ten (10) NYS Regions. Designation of the local areas took into account consistency with labor market areas and regional economic areas in NYS, and the availability of federal and non-federal resources necessary to administer workforce development activities, including appropriate education and training providers. The 33 local areas are:

Capital Region:

- Albany/Schenectady/Rensselaer;
- Columbia/Greene; and
- Saratoga/Warren/Washington.

Central Region:

- Cayuga/Cortland;
- Onondaga; and
- Oswego.

Finger Lakes Region:

- Genesee/Livingston/Orleans/Wyoming;
- Monroe; and
- Ontario/Seneca/Wayne/Yates.

Long Island Region:

- Hempstead/Long Beach;
- Oyster Bay/North Hempstead/Glen Cove; and
- Suffolk.

Mid-Hudson Region:

- Dutchess;
- Orange;
- Rockland;
- Sullivan;
- Ulster;
- Westchester/Putnam; and
- Yonkers.

Mohawk Valley Region:

- Fulton/Montgomery/Schoharie, and
- Herkimer/Madison/Oneida.

New York City Region:

- New York City.

North Country Region:

- Clinton/Essex/Franklin/Hamilton;
- Jefferson/Lewis; and
- St. Lawrence.

Southern Tier Region:

- Broome/Tioga;
- Chemung/Schuyler/Steuben;
- Chenango/Delaware/Otsego; and
- Tompkins.

Western Region:

- Cattaraugus/Allegany;
- Chautauqua;
- Erie; and
- Niagara.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR "PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY" AND "SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY" IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS.

NYS has ten (10) regional planning areas that consist of the:

1. Capital Region;
2. Central Region;
3. Finger Lakes Region;
4. Long Island Region;
5. Mid-Hudson Region;
6. Mohawk Valley Region;
7. New York City Region;
8. North Country Region;
9. Southern Tier Region; and
10. Western Region.

Local Area Designation

TA #15-05: Initial Designation of Local Areas under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was published on April 14, 2015, to provide policy and procedure necessary for the initial designation of Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) as required by WIOA. Initial local area designation took place in 2015, requiring LWDAs to be designated by the Governor in order to receive federal funding allotments under WIOA. On behalf of the Governor, NYSDOL accepted requests from current Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Directors for LWDA initial designation for local areas that met three (3) criteria: Successful Performance; Sustained Fiscal Integrity; and a local Chief Elected Official (CEO) Agreement executed for WIOA. Designation requests were received from each of the existing 33 LWDAs, and were reviewed, verified, and organized by NYSDOL staff and approved on behalf of the Governor.

In late 2025, a few LWDAs began to explore subsequent designation, including the merger or consolidation of similar local areas. LWDAs wishing to merge or consolidate have requested to do so organically due to funding and other factors specific to the local areas. This process is likely to continue into the last two (2) years of this Modification as analysis of these initial mergers and consolidations is conducted.

In the event that units not designated in the future wish to appeal a designation decision, any appeals will be directed to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) for review, in conjunction with the Governor. For any negative determination of requests for designation as an LWDA, an appeal can be accepted from any, or all of, the local CEOs who requested the designation. Appeals must be:

- Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of disapproval;

- Submitted to the NYSDOL Director of NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD); and
- Provided concurrently to any other local CEOs affected by, but not parties to, the appeal.

The appeal must clearly address the question of how NYS's decision to not designate a unit as a LWDA is contrary to the best interest(s) of the businesses and residents of the local area, and should provide documentation to address the following:

- Geographic areas served by local educational agencies and intermediate educational agencies;
- Geographic areas served by postsecondary educational institutions and area vocational education schools;
- The extent to which the proposed local area is consistent with the labor market area;
- The distance individuals would need to travel to receive services provided in the proposed local area; and
- The resources of the local area available to effectively administer the activities carried out under Title I, Subtitle B, of WIOA.

NYS, through NYSDOL, will respond to any appeal within 30 days of receipt by scheduling an administrative hearing. If a response is not possible within 30 days, NYS will notify the appellant (and any other local CEO) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a hearing will be scheduled.

If the appeal does not result in the initial or subsequent designation of the local area, the appellant may, in accordance with 20 CFR §683.640 and within 30 days of the date of the hearing decision, appeal to the Secretary of USDOL. Appeals to the Secretary of USDOL must be submitted by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20210, Attention: ASET. A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously provided to the SWIB.

LWDB Biennial Recertification

TA #19-03.4: Biennial Recertification of LWDBs, was published on October 30, 2025, to provide updates to NYSDOL policy on LWDB Biennial Recertification under WIOA. After initial designation, LWDBs were advised that they must be recertified on a biennial basis (once every two years). LWDB recertification includes four (4) recertification elements:

1. Board Composition;
2. Satisfactory Performance;
3. Sustained Fiscal Integrity; and
4. Current CEO agreement.

Through administrative review of the four (4) recertification elements listed above, NYSDOL will determine whether each LWDB is in compliance. LWDBs in compliance with all four (4) recertification elements will be recertified by NYSDOL on behalf of the Governor.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

In the event that units not designated in the future wish to appeal a designation decision, any appeals will be directed to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) for review, in conjunction with the Governor. For any negative determination of requests for designation as a Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA), an appeal can be accepted from any, or all, the local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) who requested the designation. Appeals must be:

- Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of disapproval;
- Submitted to the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) Director of NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD); and
- Provided concurrently to any other local CEOs affected by, but not parties to, the appeal.

The appeal must clearly address the question of how NYS's decision to not designate a unit as a LWDA is contrary to the best interest(s) of the businesses and residents of the local area, and should provide documentation to address the following:

- Geographic areas served by local educational agencies and intermediate educational agencies;
- Geographic areas served by postsecondary educational institutions and area vocational education schools;
- The extent to which the proposed local area is consistent with the labor market area;
- The distance individuals would need to travel to receive services provided in the proposed local area; and
- The resources of the local area available to effectively administer the activities carried out under Title I, Subtitle B, of WIOA.

NYS, through NYSDOL, will respond to any appeal within 30 days of receipt by scheduling an administrative hearing. If a response is not possible within 30 days, NYS will notify the appellant (and any other local CEO) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a hearing will be scheduled.

If the appeal does not result in the initial or subsequent designation of the local area, the appellant may, in accordance with 20 CFR §683.640 and within 30 days of the date of the hearing decision, appeal to the Secretary of USDOL. Appeals to the Secretary of USDOL must be submitted by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20210, Attention: ASET. A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously provided to the SWIB.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING.

At this time and as per TA #20-02, Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) have developed local funding mechanisms to allocate infrastructure funding costs amongst the One-Stop partners. If a LWDA triggers the State Funding Mechanism (SFM), One-Stop partners will be afforded an opportunity to appeal determinations by NYS associated with the partner's allocation under the SFM. Any appeal(s) will be directed to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) for review, in conjunction with the Governor. An appeal can be accepted from any, or all, of the local One-Stop partners subject to the SFM.

Appeals must be:

- Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of infrastructure cost allocation under the SFM;
- Submitted to the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) Director of NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD); and
- Provided concurrently to any other local One-Stop partners affected by, but not parties to, the appeal.

The appeal must clearly identify the disputed aspects of the determination and demonstrate how the basis of the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of the SFM.

NYS will respond to any appeal within 30 days of receipt. If a response is not possible within 30 days, NYS will notify the appellant (and any other local One-Stop partner) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a decision will be issued.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

All Statewide policies and guidance documents are available on the NYSDOL Policy Directives webpage. When providing guidance on the use of State funds for workforce investment activities, local areas are typically advised to follow federal guidelines and already established and relevant State guidance. An example is PGL #24-03.1 for the Office of Just Energy Transition (OJET) Renewable Energy Training Initiative (RETI).

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

NYS's investment in workforce development continues to foster collaboration among State agency partners, as well as with industry, employers, institutions of higher education, and workforce trainers. This holistic approach to workforce development will help NYS achieve the vision and goals outlined in Section II.b. of this Plan.

NYSDOL is one of many NYS agencies charged with implementing various workforce development programs for the benefit of New Yorkers in need of services. Since WIOA provides for a portion of State allotments under each of its core programs to be set aside for the Governor, the focus is to allocate these set-aside funds to high-priority initiatives, several of which are discussed in greater detail throughout this Plan.

Highlighted below are important programs/initiatives/strategies currently being funded (or to be funded) with set aside funding encompassing both mandatory and discretionary activities:

Workforce Development Training (WDT)

To continue upon the success of the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Workforce Development Initiative (WDI) programs, during PYs 2024 and 2025, NYSDOL made up to $25M in federal WIOA funding available for three (3) new Workforce Development Training (WDT) programs. Each program has a unique purpose aimed at providing training for individuals in NYS who are unemployed/underemployed and/or in low or middle-skills occupations. The broad purpose of the training is to help individuals overcome employment barriers and/or obtain a higher level of employment. Specifically, these programs provide the following:

- Employment Retention and Advancement Training (ERAT) provides occupational skills training, commensurate with regional priorities, to existing employees/incumbent workers, who are in low and middle-skills occupations leading to job advancement and retention;
- Reemployment Training Grant (RTG) secures the services of eligible organizations that can assist NYSDOL by providing occupational skills training commensurate with regional priorities to unemployed/underemployed individuals to qualify them for full-time or part-time employment, or if currently employed, a higher level of employment; and
- Work Readiness Training (WRT) provides funding to eligible organizations to conduct workplace readiness training. Workplace readiness skills are skills or behaviors necessary for any job and skills employers seek from any employee. These skills are sometimes referred to as soft skills or job readiness skills.

New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION)

In October 2021, Governor Hochul announced a commitment of $11.1M in federal workforce development funding over three (3) years to expand the successful network of Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) to all 33 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) to better serve individuals with disabilities in NYS Career Centers. This expansion builds on past systems change projects supported by the federal Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant, which has served more than 31,000 individuals since 2010. The DEI grants were designed to create systems change, increasing the quality-of-service delivery to adults and youth with disabilities. NYSDOL continues its commitment to serve individuals with disabilities through New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION), with a goal to serve 45,000 individuals with disabilities.

In July 2025, NYSDOL issued TA #21-06.4 extending the period of performance and State-level WIOA funding of NY SCION.

Cornell University's Dairy Foods Extension Program

A Project Memorandum of Understanding has been executed between NYSDOL and Cornell University utilizing $921,712 in WIOA State-level funding to support a Workforce Development Specialist position for five (5) years, from June 1, 2023, through May 31, 2028.

Dairy processing manufacturers are critical to the vitality of NYS's agricultural industry. As NYS's land grant institution, Cornell University is committed to research and extension efforts that support the dairy industry. Over the past several years, dairy manufacturers have experienced stark workforce shortages that limit their ability to function at capacity, thereby limiting NYS's ability to produce dairy products consistently and competitively. Workforce shortages have become the major concern of dairy product manufacturers, and Cornell has become increasingly engaged in this issue from a research and extension standpoint.

This project aims to place a Workforce Development Specialist in the established Dairy Foods Extension (DFE) Program at Cornell University. The DFE team has fostered tight connections with NYS dairy processors and developed extensive resources in dairy foods processing including a dairy foods processing certificate program, a world-class food safety and quality research program, facility consultation, and troubleshooting services.

The Workforce Development Specialist works directly with the DFE team to create new programs that attract the next generation of talent to careers in the dairy processing sector as well as build upon existing programs created by the DFE team. Collectively, this work will further enhance DFE's ability to fulfill Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences land-grant mission to build

community capacity, improve lives, and enhance the economic well-being of people and communities.

Building System Capacity

NYSDOL continues to provide training and capacity-building activities to NYS's workforce development and Career Center System. Using WIOA Title I Statewide activities funds, training opportunities are provided to all levels of workforce professionals, from State and Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) members to front-line service delivery staff in the Career Centers, program providers, and stakeholders. Overseen by both NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) and NYSDOL's Employee Development through Growth and Education (EDGE) staff, capacity-building activities will continue to be delivered to workforce professionals Statewide through a variety of methods, including videoconferencing, conference calls, webinars, and classroom training.

Monitoring

As a federal pass-through entity, NYSDOL will continue routine required annual program and fiscal monitoring of its subrecipient LWDAs. NYSDOL's monitoring teams perform ongoing oversight of the local areas' activities to provide technical assistance and ensure compliance with WIOA program, participant eligibility, fiscal reporting, and fiscal integrity requirements.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS

Rapid Response

In New York State (NYS), Rapid Response has a team presence throughout the ten (10) regions for intensive job placement services. Each Rapid Response team is attached to Business Engagement and remains the responsibility of the region's Associate Business Services Representative (BSR). The team conducts onsite customized service orientations for affected workers, covering topics such as securing OSOS registration information; reemployment services; NYS public health care enrollment options; and when appropriate, an overview of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits that includes the individual eligibility process. Both the business and affected workers are coded in OSOS with a specific Rapid Response or Expeditious Response Event Number for intensive reemployment service tracking.

Rapid Response makes a concerted effort to begin reemployment services before layoffs occur. The Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) crafts each service plan by involving the business, labor union (if attached), local New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) management, and WIOA partners, in addition to providing account updates that also include the Statewide Rapid Response Coordinator, Statewide TAA Coordinator, and the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Unit.

Onsite (or provided virtually) information and service include, but are not limited to:

- Customized service orientation involving a slideshow or alternate use of an abbreviated service orientation leading into immediate one-on-one service;
- Use of testimonials (business and job seeker) for encouraging new customer engagement;

- Information on pertinent expanding industries (where the job openings are);
- Initial assessment;
- Development of a resume (template for consistency) and customization for specific job openings;
- Sending interim job leads (template for consistency) that includes discussion with Business Services for maximum efficacy;
- Employment referrals;
- Contact with a business where a customer applied for employment to advocate on their behalf and encourage strong hiring consideration;
- Customized career fairs (including introducing qualified customers to specific recruiters that would be a good match for employment); and
- Local training funds and TAA information when a petition is certified for classroom training or On-the-Job Training (OJT).

Rapid Response teams (including supervisory staff) maintain and case-manage job seeker caseloads with a goal of two to ten (2-10), based on title, meaningful service contacts daily. In addition, RRCs and Employment Counselors have the goal of two to four (2-4), based on title, meaningful discussions with businesses daily for job seeker advocacy; layoff aversion (promoting Shared Work consideration); and uncovering Business Service needs. At times of high customer demand, goals may adjust to focus solely on affected worker engagement. Also, Rapid Response aggressively pursues media publications and local workforce intelligence for generating Expeditious Response leads or even anticipating service before a WARN notice is submitted. Note, the TAA section later in this document provides additional information on the coordination between the two (2) programs.

D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

Natural Disaster Preparedness

New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) can deliver the following to assist with Natural Disaster Preparedness:

1. Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG);
2. Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA); and
3. Mobile Disaster Worker Response Team.

1. Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG)

Disaster DWG funds are available to assist with clean-up and other activities under three (3) circumstances:

a. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Declaration for NYS includes the availability of public assistance funding for the affected counties;

b. Federal agency declarations, other than FEMA – Federal declarations from the Department of Commerce and the Small Business Administration are examples of eligible federal declarations; or

c. Relocation of a large group – Circumstances where a substantial number of individuals, defined as 50 or more, relocate to another area from a disaster area.

Eligible Applicants

All Disaster DWG applications must be submitted by the NYS agency or outlying area designated by the Governor to receive WIOA DW formula funds or by an organization eligible for funding through the Indian and Native American Program (INAP) (WIOA Section 166(c)).

Participants must be determined eligible as defined in WIOA Sec. 170(d)(2). Eligibility requirements apply to the following individuals residing within the declared disaster area, or who are forced to relocate due to the disaster or emergency event:

- Individuals who are temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the disaster;
- Other eligible DWs as defined in WIOA Section 3(15);
- Long-term unemployed workers, as defined by NYS; and
- Self-employed individuals who become unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster. Outreach efforts should emphasize workers who lost employment as a result of the disaster. Veterans' preference applies within these eligible groups.

2. Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

- Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) provides monetary benefits to self-employed individuals whose employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster and who are not eligible for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits.
- The FEMA Disaster Declaration for NYS will support justification for implementing DUA.
- NYSDOL's Telephone Claims Center (NYSDOL/TCC) staff are refreshed on DUA procedures so they may assist customers calling the center who have questions related to filing for benefits.

3. Mobile Disaster Worker Response Team

- Career Center staff, Business Services staff, and Rapid Response staff form Mobile Disaster Worker Response Teams.
- The Mobile Disaster Worker Response Teams visit community locations in significantly impacted areas (i.e., shelters, libraries, schools, etc.) to assist businesses and impacted individuals, and to provide on-the-ground information and support regarding State-level efforts.
- Staff does the following for impacted businesses and individuals:
    - Register them in OSOS to facilitate eligibility for program services;
    - Connect impacted workers with appropriate employment opportunities through the Disaster DWG;
    - Assist impacted workers to apply for DUA benefits; and
    - Post links and emergency phone numbers where businesses and workers can contact NYSDOL for services (this includes using the NYSDOL/TCC as the point of contact for all incoming telephone calls).

NYSDOL utilizes a Mobile Disaster Worker Response team, as defined in item #3 above, to deploy services to community locations impacted by natural disasters. Services are designed to be easily accessible and mitigate barriers to employment. As a member of the Mobile Disaster Worker Response team, Rapid Response coordinates with FEMA, additional State Agencies, and other entities to serve businesses and individuals. NYSDOL implemented interagency workgroups to develop connections, building a collaborative and nimble workforce development system that is prepared to act quickly when natural disasters occur.

Key Attributes of the Mobile Disaster Response team includes:

- Ongoing identification and collaboration with WIOA partners, creating a workforce system ready to respond;
- Continuous outreach and engagement of business partners developing a network of employment opportunities; and
- Regional teams with an acute understanding of the local economy and trained to serve DWs.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).

The New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) Rapid Response Program involves planning and delivery of reemployment services for affected workers prior to a mass layoff or business closure. Rapid Response services are initiated when separations meet the NYS Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act thresholds, and/or when a Trade petition is submitted to USDOL.

In NYS, ten (10) regional Rapid Response Teams, attached to Business Engagement, impact the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. When a WARN notice is filed, the Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) contacts the business within two (2) days of receipt of the WARN. If the business is not TAA certified, and fact finding indicates trade implications prompting the layoff/closure, the RRRC will assist the business with filing the TAA petition or will file directly on behalf of the affected workers. Similar action is taken when a layoff/closure does not trigger the WARN thresholds and the RRRC becomes aware through business intelligence. For businesses that are already TAA certified, the Rapid Response team provides workers with an introduction to the benefits and services available under TAA and guides them to the local career planner for help with accessing benefits. Also, when NYS receives notice from USDOL that a new TAA petition is filed, the Statewide Trade Act Coordinator alerts the System, activating Rapid Response services.

The Rapid Response Team conducts onsite and virtual customized service orientations for workers, covering reemployment services, NYS public health care enrollment options, and if applicable, an overview of TAA benefits and the TAA individual eligibility process. All attendees of the Rapid Response orientation are registered in OSOS immediately following the orientation session. Both the business and attached affected workers are coded with a Rapid Response Event Number for intensive reemployment services and service tracking purposes.

The RRRC keeps the Statewide Trade Act Coordinator, along with the WARN Unit and key local NYSDOL and System partners, apprised of the status of layoffs. Working with the business, the Rapid Response team develops a service plan.

When the specific trade-affected workers are known, the RRRC advises the business to email the following information directly to the NYSDOL's Unemployment Insurance Division (NYSDOL/UID) Benefits Section, to begin the process of determining individual worker eligibility:

- Name of trade-affected worker;
- Social Security number;
- Worker's address;
- Division of the company where the worker was assigned;
- Employment start date;
- Separation date; and
- Reason for separation.

b. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Acronym List for Section VI.b.1.	
AAP	Affirmative Action Plan
AEG	Apprenticeship Expansion Grant
ASE	Apprenticeship State Expansion
DEPA	Direct Entry Pre-Apprenticeship
DW	Dislocated Worker
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
OJT	On-the Job Training
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RAEN	Regional Adult Education Network
REDC	Regional Economic Development Council
RFA	Request for Applications
RI	Related Instruction

SAE	State Apprenticeship Expansion
SAEF	State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WIPS	Workforce Integrated Performance System

As discussed in detail throughout this Plan, work-based training models are an integral component of the employment and training services offered in NYS. Adults, Dislocated Workers (DWs), and Youth all benefit from the integration of education and hands-on work experience these programs provide.

The Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program is the gold standard of work-based training, integrating On-the Job Training (OJT) and Related Instruction (RI) to meet the needs of businesses and jobseekers. Work-based training is also made available to participants through several employment and training program contracts awarded through competitive procurements.

There is value in examining NYS's ongoing commitment to the RA program model. The timeline below, while not inclusive of every milestone, reflects how NYS continues to build on the success of RA programs year over year since the implementation of WIOA:

- 2016 – NYSDOL was awarded a $200,000 Apprenticeship State Accelerator Grant from USDOL, followed by $1.5M grant for State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE).
    - The funds from these grants allowed NYSDOL to expand RA throughout NYS in new and emerging occupations.
- 2017 – The 2017-2018 NYS budget included the Empire State Apprenticeship Tax Credit (ESATC) Program, which began January 1, 2018, and continues through 2026, providing up to $10M annually for expenditure.
    - ESATC provides tax credits that start at $2,000 per qualified apprentice employed full-time for at least six (6) months during the year. Additional credits are available for each year the apprentice remains in the RA program. Enhanced credits are available to businesses that employ disadvantaged youth as apprentices.
    - There are also credits available to businesses that provide apprentices with the support of a mentor for the full calendar year. This program is focused on in-demand occupations throughout NYS.
- 2018 – NYSDOL was awarded $1.8M under the SAE Continuation Funding Grant.
    - The 2016 Apprenticeship State Accelerator Grant concluded and was a stepping-stone toward the goal of RA expansion.
- 2019 – NYS embarked on an ambitious plan to further expand RA by increasing the number of RA programs in high-demand fields, increasing the number of women and minorities in all RA programs, and simplifying and streamlining the RA program registration process.
    - NYSDOL applied for and received approximately $4.4M under the PY 2018 Apprenticeship State Expansion (ASE) Grant, which ended on June 30, 2023.
- 2020 – NYSDOL was awarded a $450,000 SAE 2020 base grant, which also ended on June 30, 2023, to support new staff and marketing efforts, further allowing NYSDOL to sustain and expand RA throughout NYS.
- 2023 – NYSDOL released another round of the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant (AEG-4) Request for Applications (RFA), which utilized $3M in State Apprenticeship Expansion

Formula (SAEF) grant funding, to support new and existing RA sponsors and signatories with a focus on high growth industries and other in-demand occupations identified by Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

  - All rounds of AEG funding were successful with a total of 76 programs funded. In addition to the $3M in allocated SAEF competitive funding for AEG-4, awards in excess will utilize WIOA funding.
  - NYSDOL was awarded SAEF Base Formula Funding in the amount of $1.5M and $6M in Competitive Funding that will collectively create new, and expand existing RA programs, while also driving system innovation and improvement.
  - NYSDOL made $2M in SAEF funding available under the Direct Entry Pre-Apprenticeship Programs (DEPA) RFA, intended to support 300 participants in Direct Entry pre-apprentice programs that lead to NYS RA programs and support entry into NYS RA programs for underrepresented populations including women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. NYSDOL is particularly interested in supporting DEPA programs that provide participants with training and exposure to various trades and offer opportunities for entry into RA training programs. Targeted industries include, but are not limited to, Building and Construction, Manufacturing, and Information Technology.

- 2024 – The following trades were approved: Workforce Development Specialist; Behavior Technician; Coordinator (Trade Shows, Events, Conferences, Exhibitions, and Meetings); School Administrator (Building Administrator); Underwater Instructor; Customer Service Representative; Industrial Hygienist; Safety and Health Inspector; Social Service Assistant; Bartender; Care Coordinator; Nanotechnology Engineering Technician; Truck Driver, Light (Last-mile Delivery); and General Insurance Associate.
  - Seven (7) Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers created a regional apprenticeship network that continues to connect Adult Education programs with RA career pathways and opportunities.
  - NYSDOL was awarded SAEF2 Base Formula Funding in the amount of $1.8M that will collectively create new, and expand existing RA Programs, while also driving system innovation and improvement.
- 2025 – NYSDOL was awarded SAEF3 Base Formula Funding in the amount of $1.9M that will collectively create new, and expand existing RA Programs, while also driving system innovation and improvement.
  - As of June 20, 2025, a total of 21 awards totaling $3,607,000 have been made under the DEPA RFA, utilizing the $2M in allocated SAEF competitive funding and WIOA funding for the excess. Additionally, there have been a total of 306 DEPA participants and 39 of those participants have transitioned to a NYS RA program.

Since 2016, NYSDOL has approved almost 600 new programs and of those programs, almost 70% were in trades other than Construction. In 2024 and 2025, NYSDOL approved almost 167 new programs and of those programs, 150 were in trades other than Construction.

As of September 30, 2025, there were 598 sponsors operating 924 RA programs in NYS. NYSDOL had 17,836 active apprentices working in these different programs. As of reporting, 357 of the sponsors were in the Building and Construction trades, 222 were in other trades/occupations including Manufacturing and Health Care, and 19 had programs in both Construction and non-Construction

trades. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the active apprentices are in the traditional Building and Construction trades and 18% are in all the other trades combined.

From a regional standpoint, the Finger Lakes region has the most active RA programs, and New York City is second. By location, almost half of all registered apprentices are in New York City and over 80% of those apprentices are in the Building and Construction trades.

Traditionally, RA programs were only approved as time-based programs where apprentices had to complete a specific number of hours in each OJT task but did not have to demonstrate competency. However, NYS's RA regulations permit the use of hybrid and competency-based approaches to training. The hybrid approach is a combination of the time-based and competency-based approaches and requires a minimum number of OJT hours for each skill prior to testing. NYSDOL is seeing in an increase in the number of trades approved to use hybrid and competency-based training approaches. For example, in 2024, the trade of School Administrator (Building Administrator) was approved with a competency training approach. Recently, NYSDOL has also approved a change of approach to time-based for the trades of Technical Sales Representative, Instructor/Trainer (Information Technology), and Data Analyst. Approval of hybrid and competency-based programs allows RA program sponsors and apprentices additional flexibility in the length of time needed to complete a RA program. NYSDOL anticipates developing and moving additional trades into alternative training approaches, which allows for diversity and expansion into new and emerging industries.

In parallel to the expansion efforts, NYSDOL is looking into ways to enhance its data collection and management system to improve processes and transparency and to better align with USDOL's grant reporting requirements through the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). An enhanced, more modernized system of collecting and managing data will allow for a more accurate and seamless method of tracking and reporting program and apprentice information. NYSDOL has been working on a new data system which is being built on the Microsoft Dynamics platform. The first phase of this system was rolled out in June 2025. This rollout enabled the internal Apprenticeship team to begin using the new system. Phase two of the project includes a public-facing portal. This portal will include a secure login allowing sponsors to enroll new apprentices online. The Apprenticeship team has conducted user acceptance testing internally and are preparing for this to be rolled out for all sponsors to begin using.

RA programs are an important tool for economic mobility and growth. All NYS RA sponsors are required to complete an Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) or Non-Discrimination Plan, depending on the size of their program. These are approved by NYSDOL and are reviewed and updated as necessary through regular program monitoring. As an on-going process to assist RA sponsors with meeting Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) goals and serving underrepresented communities, EEO reviews are conducted periodically to evaluate diversity in RA programs and provide technical assistance to Program Sponsors, with the goal of supporting and promoting a diverse and equitable workforce.

To further support EEO goals, Direct Entry may be used by sponsors to bring apprentices into their programs. Direct Entry is an effective tool to help sponsors reach underrepresented populations and to meet EEO goals. It provides individuals who successfully complete a Direct Entry apprenticeship preparation program, and who met the minimum requirements for a NYS RA program, with the direct opportunity for an interview with the sponsor of a RA program.

Additional goals for RA are described in Section VI.b.2.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

Acronym List for Section VI.b.2.	
AAP	Affirmative Action Plan
ATR	Apprenticeship Training Representative
CUNY	City University of New York
DW	Dislocated Worker
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ESD/OSWD	Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development
NYS	New York State
NYSDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYSDOL/OWD	New York State Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Development
NYSED	New York State Education Department
OSI	Office for Special Initiatives
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RI	Related Instruction
SUNY	State University of New York
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

New York State's (NYS's) commitment to and success in expanding Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs is in large part due to effective service design and delivery strategy.

New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) continues to strengthen the existing relationship between RA and the Career Center System. The NYSDOL CareerZone website was integrated with the RA Unit's website to provide career information for each of the apprenticeable trades/occupations. CareerZone is targeted towards youth, who as a population face a tough economic climate. It allows individuals to explore careers related to their individual strengths, skills, and talent, including apprenticeable trades/occupations.

NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) oversees the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker (DW), and Youth programs, Title III Wagner-Peyser Act program, and the NYS RA Program. The alignment of the RA Program with WIOA programs allows for the marketing of RA opportunities to those receiving services within the System. These programs align to provide seamless delivery of services to DWs and unemployed individuals in local Career Centers located in NYS's 33 LWDAs. RA program sponsors connect to the System and unemployed and underemployed individuals by having their apprentice recruitment announcements posted on the NYSDOL RA website and through the NYS Job Bank.

DWs and unemployed individuals are encouraged to apply for RA opportunities through various job fairs and Career Centers. Many RA program sponsors recruit publicly through their local Career Centers for new apprentices. Sponsors that elect to conduct area-wide recruitments are required to submit their recruitment information to NYSDOL, which is then distributed to local media, posted on NYSDOL's webpage, and listed in the NYS Job Bank. NYSDOL also promotes RA through its website, which contains marketing materials and provides an overview of RA for employers and job seekers.

RA staff participate in monthly NYSDOL/OWD meetings to provide information and updates to all NYSDOL/OWD staff related to RA. RA also provides an "Apprenticeship 101" training as necessary

which provides a basic overview of RA to NYSDOL/OWD staff. Navigators and Apprenticeship Training Representatives (ATRs) are located throughout NYS and work with current and potential sponsors to develop new programs in new and emerging industries and to provide technical assistance. In addition, Navigators and ATRs in some regions of NYS are stationed within the Career Centers, which facilitates direct communication amongst RA and Career Center staff. This includes working with individuals responsible for Business Services and Veterans Programs. These staff members also educate businesses about the importance of RA as a proven vehicle for preparation into a successful workforce.

NYSDOL also works closely with New York State Education Department (NYSED), which is responsible for oversight of Related Instruction (RI) for apprentices. A major piece of NYSED's responsibility is approving the RI component of RA programs, including approval of their section of the training outline for every trade/occupation, and the completion of required RI by apprentices. This partnership contributes to successful completion of the RI portion of each RA program.

NYSDOL works closely with business and educational partners to connect with prospective sponsors and apprentices, helping to create a more diverse workforce skilled in new and emerging trades. NYSDOL staff including Navigators and ATRs are conducting virtual and in-person Statewide RA roundtable events for prospective sponsors and stakeholders in workforce development, meetings with potential and existing sponsors, and online recruitment efforts. In pursuing development into new, non-traditional trades, the ability to conduct virtual meetings on a larger industry scale with prospective group sponsors and NYSDOL's State University of New York (SUNY) partners have also been beneficial.

NYSDOL recently created the Office for Special Initiatives (OSI) which includes a team of Registered Apprenticeship Business Navigators ("Navigators"). The team's mission is to expand the number of businesses operating NYS RA programs by identifying areas of opportunity and facilitating program access. Overseen by a manager in Albany, as of September 2025, there are currently three (3) Navigators, one (1) each in Plattsburgh, Elmira, and White Plains. The Navigators focus on:

- Creating new RA opportunities in non-traditional and high demand industries like Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing;
- Business outreach, program application assistance, and recruiting assistance;
- Leveraging other workforce programs, units, and resources to holistically serve businesses; and
- Working closely with SUNY partners to promote available grant funding to offset the cost of related classroom instruction.

NYSDOL is committed to increasing the value of RAs for employers. A new RA data system built on the Microsoft Dynamics platform includes a public-facing portal with secure login allowing sponsors to more seamlessly enroll new apprentices online.

SUNY has hired four (4) Apprenticeship Business Developers to work in tandem with NYSDOL staff in meeting with employers and school districts to explain the benefits of RA and grow this program. City University of New York (CUNY) has also expanded its pre-apprenticeship and RA programming, including in high-demand sectors such as Software Engineering and Business Operations.

Over the past few years, SUNY was allocated funding to partner with NYSDOL to develop new pre-apprenticeship and RA positions in Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care and other non-Construction sectors. As a result of the strong partnership between SUNY and NYSDOL, many

campuses now have staff with in-depth knowledge of RA programs that is also helping to grow this initiative.

RA programs are an important tool for economic mobility and growth. All sponsors of NYS RA Programs are required to complete an Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) or Non-Discrimination Plan, depending on the size of their program. These are approved by NYSDOL and are reviewed and updated as necessary through regular program monitoring. As an on-going process to assist RA sponsors with meeting Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) goals and serving underrepresented communities, EEO reviews are conducted periodically to evaluate diversity and provide technical assistance to sponsors, with the goal of supporting and promoting a diverse and equitable workforce.

To further support EEO goals, Direct Entry may be used by sponsors to bring apprentices into their programs. Direct Entry is an effective tool to help sponsors reach underrepresented populations and to meet EEO goals. It provides individuals who successfully complete a Direct Entry apprenticeship preparation program, and who met the minimum requirements for a NYS RA program, with the direct opportunity for an interview with the sponsor of a RA program.

Additional goals for RA include:

- Prioritizing the expansion of RA through Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (ESD/OSWD), and advising ESD/OSWD on ways to better connect with regional workforce intermediaries;
- Enhancing collaboration between NYS agencies, SUNY, workforce training providers, and the private sector;
- Creating a marketing campaign to make parents and guidance counselors of middle and high school students, with and without disabilities, aware of the benefits of RA programs and work-based learning;
- Expanding the Apprenticeship and Training Council to include more growth sectors;
- Developing better linkages to educational institutions.

As of September 30, 2025, there were 598 sponsors operating 924 RA programs in NYS. NYSDOL had 17,836 active apprentices working in these different programs. As of reporting, 357 of the sponsors were in the Building and Construction trades, 222 were in other trades/occupations including Manufacturing and Health Care, and 19 had programs in both Construction and non-Construction trades. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the active apprentices are in the traditional Building and Construction trades and 18% are in all the other trades combined.

From a regional standpoint, the Finger Lakes region has the most active RA programs, and New York City is second. By location, almost half of all registered apprentices are in New York City and over 80% of those apprentices are in the Building and Construction trades.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

Training providers and offerings must be listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) in order to receive WIOA funding through an Individual Training Account (ITA).

Local Development Workforce Boards (LWDBs) will accept applications, determine if training offerings are for in-demand occupations, assist training providers that wish to be placed on the ETPL by providing information on the application process, and determine the Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of training providers and their offering(s).

During the Initial Eligibility Review Process, LWDBs are responsible for the following:

- Notifying providers of the opportunity to apply to be on the ETPL;
- Acting on a training provider's offering application within 30 days of receipt;
- Setting levels of expected program-specific performance;
- Ensuring training providers submit for consideration performance and cost information for each course offering. Performance information should include data on employment 2nd and 4th Quarter after exit, median earnings 2nd Quarter after exit, and credential attainment;
- Requiring that training providers be in compliance with State laws by having a current license, certification, registration, approval, or exemption from the appropriate State and/or federal oversight agency;
- Evaluating the experience and reputation of the training provider and the schedule of offerings; and
- Considering other information that may be locally relevant in deciding funding eligibility (i.e., whether the training provider is in partnership with a business).

NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) WIOA & Grants Administration Office, overseeing administration of the ETPL, works in conjunction with NYSDOL's Apprenticeship Office to grant Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs automatic eligibility on the ETPL. In accordance with TEGL 08-19, Attachment II and TA #18-02.6: Eligible Training Provider List, NYS has established a minimally burdensome mechanism for adding any interested RA programs to the list, thus providing a streamlined application process. RA programs wishing to appear on the ETPL must provide only the following:

- The occupation(s);
- The name and address of the sponsor;
- The name and address of the Related Instruction (RI) provider (and the location of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address);
- Method/Training Approach (Time-based, Competency-based, or Hybrid);
- Length of instruction; and
- Number of apprentices.

After a training provider has reached the end of the 12-month period of Initial Eligibility, LWDBs must perform a biennial review ("Continued Eligibility") of the provider that includes the following:

- Training providers must complete accurate and timely performance and program cost information for offerings that have been on the ETPL for 12 months. ETP performance must include the following performance measures: Employment 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit, Median Earnings, and Credential Attainment;

- LWDBs must review the information provided and make a determination to approve the training provider for a period of Continued Eligibility, or remove it from the ETPL;
- If approved, the period of Continued Eligibility is 24 months from the date the training provider/offering is reviewed and granted Continued Eligibility; and
- A Continued Eligibility review must be performed at least once every 24 months thereafter. LWDBs consider a number of factors at the local level when considering a training provider and its offerings to remain on the ETPL, such as economic, geographic, and demographic data. Program-specific cost and performance information, local training needs, compliance with oversight agencies, and LWDB experience with the training provider are all aspects that can be considered when establishing Continued Eligibility.

When recommending a training provider and its offering(s) remain on the ETPL, the LWDB must consider the following:

- Specific economic, geographic, and demographic factors in the local area and the characteristics of the population to be served, including offerings for rural areas, offerings provided through the use of technology, and offerings that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities;
- Program-specific performance information and attainment submitted by the training provider;
- Program-specific cost information, including tuition and fees;
- Compliance with the license, certification, registration, approval, or exemption required by the appropriate State and/or federal oversight agency to provide the training;
- LWDB experience with the training provider;
- Ways in which the criteria can encourage training providers to offer quality training courses leading to industry-recognized certificates and postsecondary credentials;
- Training needs of the local area with respect to in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and
- Any other information that may be relevant in determining Continued Eligibility status (e.g., information reported to State agencies on federal and State training programs other than WIOA Title I-B programs).

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

On January 20, 2023, NYSDOL published TA #23-01: Serving Priority Populations and Priority of Service under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult Program, to (1) provide guidance to the workforce development system on the requirement to serve priority populations under the WIOA Title I Adult Program; (2) priority of service requirements under the

WIOA Title I Adult Program; and (3) data entry and data element validation (DEV) requirements for Adult Priority of Service.

NYSDOL is requiring that at least 50.1% of WIOA Title I Adults receiving individualized career or training services in each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) fall into one (1) of the following three (3) priority populations:

1. Recipients of public assistance;
2. Other low-income individuals; and
3. Individuals who are basic skills deficient, which includes English Language Learners.

Following PY 2021 Q4, NYSDOL began distributing Adult Priority of Service performance data to the local areas to ensure any errors in OSOS can be corrected, as applicable. Each quarter since NYSDOL began tracking Adult Priority of Service performance and providing technical assistance to individual local areas as needed, Statewide performance has improved by approximately 2%-4%. As of the last quarter of PY 2024, the Statewide percentage was 58.7%, up from 47.6% one (1) year before and above the minimal required 50.1% threshold. NYSDOL continues to assist local areas with related data entry to ensure they also meet this minimum requirement.

NYSDOL's WIOA Title I Program monitoring also includes a review of each local area's priority of service policy for compliance with federal legislation; regulations; federal and State guidance, including WIOA §134(c)(3)(E), 20 CFR 680.210(d), 20 CFR 680.600-640; and TA #23-01: Serving Priority Populations and Priority of Service under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult Program, and TA #12-12.5: Implementation of Veterans' Priority of Service for Covered Persons in Qualified USDOL Job Training Programs.

NYSDOL Program monitoring guides were updated to match the revised technical assistance on priority of service and this updated guide has been incorporated into the annual WIOA Adult Program Monitoring review.

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has been working to foster greater collaboration between the social services districts and their Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in order to connect more individuals in these priority populations to WIOA career services. The agency has encouraged district Employment Coordinators to attend Regional Business Service Teams (RBST) meetings and facilitated LWDB representatives giving presentations at the Employment Regional Meetings the agency hosts with districts in different areas across the State. OTDA has also worked with some social services districts and their LWDBs individually to establish better coordination of services for the public assistance, low income, and basic skills-deficient populations. OTDA Employment and Advancement Services management staff attend LWDB director meetings, when possible, to provide updates about public assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) employment policy changes.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Local Transfer of Funds Between Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

NYS's criteria regarding local transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker (DW) programs is shared with the local areas annually and provided in TA #17-06: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1B Adult and DW Transfer Requests and Administration to Program Funds Transfer Requests. No funds may be transferred to or from the Youth Program.

Current guidelines for transferring funds are as follows:

1. All transfer requests must be received by NYSDOL no later than June 30th of the Program Year (PY) of the allocation of local funds.
2. Funds retain their year of appropriation identity and must be tracked, accounted for, and reported as follows: Transfers between Adult and DW funds will be reported on the Monthly Accrued Expenditure Report separately in a section identified expressly for expenditures associated with the transfer.
    a. Administration funds transferred to the originating program funds will be reported as part of the originating program. When transferring funds from Administration back to the originating program funds, no more than the original ten percent (10%) designated as Administration can be returned to a program. For example, if $100,000 were awarded as Adult funds and this allocation was split on the Notice of Obligational Authority (NOA) between Adult ($90,000) and Administration ($10,000), the maximum transfer that could be made between Administration and Adult funds would be $10,000.
3. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) opting to transfer funds in accordance with TA #17-06 must:
    a. Use the forms entitled "WIOA Title 1B Adult and Dislocated Worker Transfer Request" and/or "WIOA Administration to Program Funds Transfer Request." These forms are located on the NYSDOL website on the Programs and Tools webpage under the Fiscal filter;
    b. Provide documentation of the LWDB's approval of each transfer via a written email statement or a signed document (in PDF) by the LWDB Director detailing the LWDB's agreement of the transfer(s); and
        i. If a vote of approval is made by the LWDB's Executive Committee to transfer funds, the decision must subsequently be ratified by the full LWDB. In this case, the transfer will be approved contingent upon full LWDB approval; and
        ii. It is acceptable for the LWDB to provide a blanket approval to transfer funds at any given time during a defined PY, thereby eliminating the need for multiple LWDB approvals.
    c. For the transfer of funds between Adult and DW funds, include a statement that all participants eligible for the DW program will be enrolled in the DW program, and no eligible participant will be denied services, including training services, due to transfer of funds.

All documents, statements, forms, etc., compiled by the LWDB to transact a transfer request must be submitted to NYSDOL at Dews.aers-taa@labor.ny.gov.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

TAA Co-enrollment with WIOA

In NYS, the Trade Act Program is implemented using a State Administered, Locally Operated model where all Trade Act participants are co-enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW) Program, consistent with 2020 Trade Act regulatory requirements.

Dissemination of Policy

On April 27, 2021 NYSDOL published TA #21-03, illustrating that NYSDOL partners with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and Career Center staff to promote the integration of services available under the Trade Act through required customer co-enrollment in Trade Act and WIOA Title I DW services. Specifically, federal regulations state that the Career Center System must co-enroll Trade-affected workers who are eligible for WIOA's DW Program and must also make co-enrollment available to Trade-affected workers who are eligible for other One-Stop partner programs. This partnership provides Trade-affected DWs the ability to access appropriate services, within the established time restrictions, to be eligible to receive Trade Act benefits.

The TA was covered as the discussion topic on a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Virtual Meeting held on May 12, 2021. Career Center staff and LWDB and partner representatives are reminded at the ongoing bimonthly TAA Virtual Meetings of the requirement to co-enroll participants. The policy remains available and accessible via NYSDOL's Policy Directives webpage.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C).

When a Trade-affected worker participates in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, TAA Central Office monitors data and reviews case files to ensure participants are served every quarter in accordance with program requirements.

The TAA Procedural Guide has been designed as a process guide for Career Center staff who are already comfortable with the overall goals and trajectory of actions needed to implement the objectives of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015 (TAARA 2015). When working with a customer, this guide can be used to quickly look up specific processes and forms that are needed at different stages.

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

In 2022 NYSDOL began an initiative to place dedicated, highly trained staff in the Career Centers prioritizing service for Trade-affected workers. This group of nine (9) Employment Counselors and two (2) Senior Employment Counselors are regionally positioned and offer both virtual and in-person service options to participants. Through virtual service options Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Employment Counselors assist mass layoffs across region lines. TAA Employment Counselors serve their regions' Career Centers by acting as points of contact for all Career Center staff.

The entire Career Center network is supported by NYSDOL TAA Central Office, which maintains a collection of Guides, Fact Sheets, and other materials updated and posted on the NYSDOL website for staff reference. When changes necessitate updates, TAA Fact Sheets and program guides are redistributed to the Career Centers for TAA program awareness.

c. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA.

State's must-

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.[16] FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.

NYSDOL's Youth Unit, part of the Career Development and Inclusion Office, places a crucial role in oversight and coordination of WIOA Youth programs across NYS. Acting as a central point of contact for youth issues and collaborating with youth-serving agencies (i.e., WIOA Core partner agencies, New York State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Youth Unit aims to drive youth initiatives at the State level. Through a dual lens of career and youth development, the Youth Unit's objective is to provide policy guidance; offer professional development opportunities; develop curriculum and tools; and identify successful practices from NYS, the nation, and the globe. Ultimately, the goal is to empower youth to make informed decisions about their future career, education, or training opportunities and ensure successful transition to adulthood.

Recognizing the importance of local programs and their unique needs, the Youth Unit conducted intensive virtual video visits with twelve (12) Local Workforce Development Boards. These visits enabled Youth Unit staff to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements and challenges faced by local programs. Furthermore, these visits allowed the Youth Unit to provide tailored on-site technical assistance to address specific needs. Valuable feedback obtained from these visits was used to continually refine and adjust the training options and guides provided to local programs to address specific needs. This iterative process ensures the continuous improvement and relevance of the resources offered.

In line with its commitment to professional development, the Youth Unit actively participates in industry conferences such as the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals Youth Conference. At this event, they conduct training sessions focused on integrating Positive Youth Development Principles into recruitment and retention strategies. Notably, one such session introduced the Recruitment and Outreach Innovation Assessment, offering programs a concrete assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their outreach strategies.

Through engagement with local programs, conducting site visits, and providing training opportunities, the Youth Unit fosters collaboration and continuous improvement in the realm of youth development. Their efforts contribute to empowering youth Statewide, enabling them to navigate educational and career paths with confidence and success.

Improved Flexibility for Youth Programs

NYSDOL released its updated Data Element Validation (DEV) TA #23-03 in April 2023 to provide guidance to System staff on new DEV allowances. NYSDOL's Quality Assurance, Youth Unit, and WIOA Administration staff conducted technical webinars and technical assistance calls to answer questions regarding these changes, and to encourage System staff to adopt the broader flexibility of self-attestation. On a local level, youth programs are in the process of updating their forms and

[16] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

processes to match the updated DEV requirements and to utilize virtual documentation to streamline enrollment and DEV processes.

Most programs are offering virtual services to provide timely case management and address transportation challenges in rural areas. Quarterly performance reports and management reports track the number of Out-of-School Youth (OSY) served and expenditure reports are generated on a quarterly basis to help local areas gauge their work with OSY.

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

Consistent with the strategic visions and goals advanced in this Plan, NYS is committed to enhancing program alignment and service delivery for youth. WIOA expanded the maximum age (up to age 24) of Out-of-School Youth (OSY), and the increased flexibility in the provision of Youth services found in the Final Regulations increases the opportunity to serve OSY in a Career Center environment and more fully engage the required and optional partners found therein. Specifically, NYSDOL is implementing multiple strategies to support engagement of OSY and will continue the efforts through collaboration with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), core partners, and additional partners in the System.

NYSDOL continues to support LWDBs to meet the 75% expenditure requirement for OSY and 20% expenditure for work experiences. In response to LWDB and school district requests resulting from the pandemic, NYSDOL requested, and was granted, a PY 2024-2025 waiver of the 75% expenditure requirement, to allow for expenditures of up to 50% for OSY and 50% for In-School-Youth (ISY).

Despite the waiver temporarily in place, NYSDOL will continue to help LWDBs to meet the 75% expenditure requirement through the provision of the following supports:

1. State Program Monitors continuing to provide routine technical assistance to LWDBs and local area youth providers; and
2. Regional and Statewide strategic guidance on effective service delivery, including OSY engagement, developed by the Youth Unit in collaboration with Quality Assurance (QA) and WIOA Administration staff. This guidance is then converted to actionable technical assistance and training opportunities delivered by Central Office staff and Program Monitors.

Additionally, Youth program success is supported through multiple avenues including:

- Bi-weekly conference calls with LWDB Directors;
- Webinars delivered as needed to youth services professionals that address topics necessary to implement successful WIOA programs. Recordings and supporting materials are made available online after each webinar;
- Quarterly performance reports;
- Online data management system for managers to analyze their Youth program performance between quarterly reports;
- Performance report reviews with areas at risk of not meeting local goals;

- Guidance documents that clarify Youth program eligibility, elements, data entry, case management, and performance concepts of the program;
- Toolkits to streamline and standardize program processes including, but not limited to, enrollment, service provision, and follow up;
- Live video technical assistance calls;
    - Monthly – Bring Your Own Questions (BYOQ) Hour, online individualized technical assistance office hours for all LWDB youth programs;
    - As needed – BYOQ Special sessions, technical assistance based on LWDB needs and trends;
    - Bi-annual – Cohort-based All About WIOA Youth training series for LWDB staff and youth providers to learn or refresh knowledge of WIOA and NYSDOL programmatic requirements and expectations, case management and performance data systems, and promising practices necessary to analyze their programs to improve services and outcomes; and
    - Upon Request – Catalog of training options for LWDBs.
- Pilot program of three (3) LWDAs to generate a pipeline of Runaway Homeless and Foster Care Youth into WIOA Youth Programs;
- A Youth-focused webpage that provides information on working papers, job search and additional resources for youth and parents; and
- The development and solicitation of Statewide grants for training and engagement of young adults.

Partnership

To enhance partnerships with core and additional partners, the WIOA Youth Collaborative workgroup was developed under the WIOA Interagency Team. The workgroup meets regularly with participation from State agencies serving youth and young adults from the foster care system, homelessness prevention programs, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, the youth justice system, Perkins Act programs, and State legislature programs focused on youth. Since inception, these entities have collaborated to train their youth providers about programs and resources available for serving youth. Topics have included the WIOA Youth program, Youth Bureaus, foster and homelessness prevention programs, TABE revisions, and the Summer Youth Employment Program. The Youth Collaborative has helped the partners understand each other's programs and built local connections for better service delivery to OSY and ISY on the local level.

Technical Assistance

The Youth Unit, along with WIOA Administration and QA Monitoring teams facilitate live video conference technical assistance calls including "All About WIOA Youth" sessions, which are provided as needed to support LWDBs upon request by LWDB Executive Directors or NYSDOL QA Monitors and conducted as part of Performance Improvement Plans. Monthly BYOQ sessions are also offered to provide technical assistance based on LWDB needs and trends observed by Youth Unit staff. These sessions are an important platform for participants to discuss solutions and successful practices, and content builds upon the cumulative knowledge shared in prior sessions.

Policies

On a local level, youth programs continue to update their incentive, basic skills deficient, needs additional assistance, follow-up, work experiences and/or supportive services polices to address virtual services necessities. With their work experience policies, the local areas are aspiring to continue to offer flexible, hybrid, virtual, and diverse work experiences and some local areas have also incorporated youth voice and input by facilitating in-house internships.

Youth Voice

WIOA youth programs actively seek to incorporate Youth Voice into programs to increase youth engagement and feedback for program improvement. Some examples are:

- Youth Advisory Councils – WIOA youth programs can create a youth advisory council that engages program participants in decision-making, advocacy, and leadership roles;
- Peer-to-peer mentoring – Young adults who have successfully completed the program can mentor current participants and share their experiences and lessons learned; and
- Youth-led workshops – WIOA youth programs can give participants the opportunity to lead workshops and trainings on topics important to them, such as communication skills, public speaking, or advocacy.

NYSDOL presented at the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals conferences in 2021-2024 on youth elements, outreach and recruitment, and work experiences, respectively, with a focus on incorporating youth voice and input into program processes.

Locally, during site visits, the Youth Unit staff notices extraordinary accomplishment walls displaying noteworthy successes by young adults which are regularly highlighted on the program's social media accounts. Incorporating youth voice leads to creative programming. For example, one local area started a basketball league and enrolled young adults at the basketball court. Another local area started a “Paint & Sip” (soda) job club where the young adults developed career vision boards. Recorded workshops for youth providers and customized training offered to providers all convey the importance of involving young adults in the development of programs.

Emerging Technologies

Most programs are offering virtual services to ensure timely case management and to address transportation challenges in rural areas. Digital services and tools include the VCC, online training via Coursera and Northstar Digital Literacy, and the use of virtual reality career exploration and training tools provided by Transfr VR. These tools help to mitigate transportation barriers and provide access to the vital digital skills young people need to find success in the current labor market.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

NYSDOL is s committed to supporting Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in ensuring the 14 program elements are made available to youth programs. This commitment includes:

- State-level supports such as tool and resource development, partnership coordination, and best practice advancement; and
- Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA)-specific technical assistance, training, and partnership development.

State-Level Supports

The NYSDOL Career Development and Inclusion Youth Unit plays a crucial role in oversight and coordination of WIOA Youth programs across NYS and other NYSDOL offices. Acting as a central point of contact for youth issues, coordinating with other NYSDOL offices, developing resources to assist local areas with the provision of challenging elements, and collaborating with youth-serving agencies (i.e., WIOA core partner agencies, New York State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance), the Youth Unit drives youth initiatives at the State level. Through the dual lens of career and youth development, the Youth Unit's objectives are to provide policy guidance; offer professional development opportunities; develop curriculum and tools; and identify successful practices from NYS, the nation, and the globe. Ultimately, the goals are to empower youth to make informed decisions about their future career, education, and/or training opportunities and to ensure their successful transition to adulthood in a career they love.

Some notable examples of State-level support that the Youth Unit provides include, but are not limited to:

- Development and implementation of self-paced training videos, live webinars, and bi-weekly workforce professional virtual call sessions that have been made publicly available to address turnover;
- Self-paced training series for new staff, such as the WIOA Title I Youth Services Brief and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1 Youth Program Basics Training Series, to ensure consistent and streamlined LWDA provision of WIOA youth program elements;
- Support, oversight, and technical assistance of multiple online career delivery platforms (i.e., CareerZone for ages 12-18, JobZone/Virtual Career Center for ages 18+) to address challenging WIOA Youth Program elements (i.e., "Services that Provide Labor Market Information" and "Financial Literacy Education"). The Youth Unit helps highlight these utilities through training and technical assistance, and demonstrations throughout NYS;
- Provision, distribution, training, and use of emerging technologies such as virtual reality headsets to satisfy the "Services that Provide Labor Market Information" WIOA Youth Program Element provision;
- Coordination and collaboration with NYSED to improve transition outcomes for ISY including, but not limited to the NYS Educator Ambassador Program and requests for State waivers such as a 50% ISY waiver for the WIOA Youth Program; and
- Presentation at Statewide professional development associations such as New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals Youth Conference.

Local-Level Supports

Recognizing the importance of local programs and their unique needs, the Youth Unit, through coordination with other youth-focused programs at NYSDOL, provides targeted supports, technical assistance, and training for LWDAs. Through engagement with local programs, site visits, and training, the Youth Unit encourages collaboration and continuous improvement in local youth development efforts. These efforts contribute to the empowerment of youth Statewide, enabling them to navigate their education and career paths with confidence and success.

Some notable examples across NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) that the Youth Unit supports include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting site visits in collaboration with the NYSDOL/OWD Director of the Bureau of Workforce Innovation and Quality. These on-site visits enable staff to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements and challenges faced by local programs. Furthermore, these visits provide tailored on-site technical assistance to address specific barriers or challenges LWDBs may face in the creation of quality programming. The valuable feedback obtained from these visits is used to continually refine and adjust the training options and guidance provided to local programs. This iterative process ensures the continuous improvement and relevance of the resources offered;
- Facilitation of monthly BYOQ technical assistance calls, specifically for WIOA Youth Program providers;
- Reviewing new or revised local policies and procurement documents as needed, to ensure quality Youth Program provision;
- Providing WIOA Youth Program personnel with live and recorded training to build local capacity for high-quality local programming on topics including, but not limited to, developing partnerships, leveraging/braiding funds, retention, and recruitment; and
- Coordination between WIOA LWDAs and local Business Services Representatives and Labor Market Analysts to expand the local area's capacity for in-demand and quality Work Experience element provision.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

NYSDOL's Youth Unit is responsible for oversight and coordination of WIOA youth programs, serving as a single point of contact on youth issues and for other youth-serving NYS agencies (e.g., New York State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and core partner programs, in support of youth initiatives Statewide. Through the dual lens of career and youth development, the Youth Unit seeks to provide policy guidance; offer professional development opportunities; develop curriculum and tools; and identify successful practices from NYS, the nation, and the globe. The goal is to help position youth for a successful

transition to adulthood and help them make decisions regarding career/college/training opportunities.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) develop comprehensive strategic plans for youth services for those activities required under WIOA. Local areas provide year-round comprehensive youth programs to eligible youth that include the provision of the youth program design framework activities as well as the 14 WIOA-required program elements. These services are provided to both In-School-Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY); however, some local areas serve only OSY and refer ISY to other providers as appropriate.

Annual Youth Program Monitoring of local area youth programs focuses on eligibility, the provision of the required 14 elements, complete customer files, and OSOS records. Due to the extraordinary programmatic challenges that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, NYSDOL also began providing local area and LWDB staff with technical assistance on WIOA performance and local subrecipient monitoring. The local Youth Program is now monitored by NYSDOL remotely, in conjunction with the monitoring of the local Adult, DW, Trade Act, and National Dislocated Worker Grants programs, with a goal of completing annual monitoring and providing the local areas with timely technical assistance feedback during the first half of the Program Year (PY) following the PY that is the subject of review. Youth service provider procurement reviews are included in annual remote local area fiscal monitoring performed by NYSDOL to ensure that Youth Program contracts are competitively awarded.

Needs Additional Assistance Policy

TA #19-02 states that if a LWDB chooses to use the needs additional assistance criteria for eligibility, policies must be developed for:

- OSY to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment; and
- ISY to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment, if serving ISY.

An individual who needs additional assistance may include, but is not limited to, a youth who is failing a core subject; a victim of abuse; suffering from substance or medical issues; an expectant father; and/or the child of an incarcerated parent. The LWDB is expected to tailor its needs additional assistance policy to reflect the specific characteristics prevalent of youth in the local area and who may benefit from Youth Program services or do not have other local services available.

Needs additional assistance policies must be reasonable, quantifiable, and based on evidence that specific characteristics of the youth identified in the policy objectively needs additional assistance. Needs additional assistance criteria is limited to 5% of newly enrolled ISY in each program year.

LWDBs developing a policy for the needs additional assistance criteria must submit the policy to NYSDOL as part of their Local Plan.

d. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

NYS is not a single-area State.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

N/A

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

N/A

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

N/A

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

N/A

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

N/A

e. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;

4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;

B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;

C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;

D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND

E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND

6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:

A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;

B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;

C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;

D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.

E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.

7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

NYS is not requesting any waivers as part of the Title I-B Operational Plan.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	N/A
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

a. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices known as the Employment Service. The Act was amended by WIA to make the Employment Service part of the Career Center System and under WIOA, to eliminate stand-alone Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Offices.

Within the context of NYS's functional alignment, and in recognition that Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants comprise over 64% of the shared job seeker participant pool of the System (Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, WIOA, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) combined customer base), NYS implemented a Statewide strategy of utilizing State merit staff to coordinate services for all customers that ensures they are afforded common service expectations and are held to common program requirements. NYS will continue to utilize only this merit staffing model for the Wagner-Peyser program in compliance with the 2020 Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility final rule.

Through functional alignment, NYS workforce professionals are trained to provide seamless services to all customers, from providing meaningful assistance with customers interested in filing for UI benefits to providing job leads and training referrals in our American Job Center locations.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

Staff capacity building is a NYS priority. NYSDOL provides high quality continuous development to workforce professionals to ensure excellent customer service to both job seekers and

businesses. This is bolstered by the use of State merit staff in the delivery of the Wagner-Peyser program.

Professional development activities are provided weekly through Career Center video conference calls, Unemployment Insurance (UI) training webinars, train-the-trainer workshops, and monthly Statewide Management Information System (MIS) webinars. Professional Development activities are posted on several platforms, including Webex, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams for easy System access and training events are viewable on a shared calendar.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION.

The NYS WIOA Interagency Team developed the Training and Accessibility Assistance Workgroup (TAAG) Workgroup to ensure that direct training and skill building occurs in the System and is consistent across all partner programs.

Through this workgroup, each agency shares resources and training materials on program eligibility requirements, benefits, and services offered by each program. Webinars are recorded by each partner and made available for all new and existing staff. These webinars will continue to be updated through 2026 to ensure staff is aware of the most up-to-date program information. Core programs receive direct training on Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, how to apply for benefits, and how to refer a suspected UI issue to NYS merit staff for adjudication of potential issues. WIOA partners are invited to participate in all webinar trainings.

In addition, live training is provided by UI experts and resource guides are available on the NYSDOL internet and intranet site. Training and guides are updated regularly to provide current UI Reform laws and changes in regulations and implementation procedures. Trainings include such topics as Assisting UI Customers in the Career Center and Identifying and Reporting UI Issues.

NYS Career Centers aid customers wishing to file a UI claim in several ways, which include providing:

- How to File for Unemployment Insurance brochures, available in multiple languages;
- Resource room computers and internet access for easy online UI claims filing and weekly certification (Resource Rooms are staffed with workforce professionals to assist as needed); and
- Access to telephones to file telephone claims and speak to UI Claims Representatives directly.

NYS established minimal Statewide program requirements designed to provide a Statewide reemployment service strategy for UI claimants that:

- Emphasizes early intervention;
- Provides Statewide service standards, yet encourages regional/local service delivery designs to tailor services to individual customer needs; and
- Speeds the referral of claimants who need additional help to other support services available within the System, including but not limited to, training/retraining.

b. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE.

Live training is provided by Unemployment Insurance (UI) experts and resource guides are available on the NYSDOL internet and intranet site. Training and guides are updated regularly to provide current UI Reform laws and changes in regulations and implementation procedures. Trainings include such topics as Assisting UI Customers in the Career Center and Identifying and Reporting UI Issues.

NYS Career Centers aid customers wishing to file a UI claim in several ways, which include providing:

- How to File for Unemployment Insurance brochures, available in multiple languages;
- Resource room computers and internet access for easy online UI claims filing and weekly certification (Resource Rooms are staffed with workforce professionals to assist as needed); and
- Access to telephones to file telephone claims and speak to UI Claims Representatives directly.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

NYS established minimal Statewide program requirements designed to provide a Statewide reemployment service strategy for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants that:

- Emphasizes early intervention;
- Provides Statewide service standards, yet encourages regional/local service delivery designs to tailor services to individual customer needs; and
- Speeds the referral of claimants who need additional help to other support services available within the System, including but not limited to training/retraining.

Key Reemployment Services Requirements

UI claimants are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Adult and/or Dislocated Worker (DW) programs. Co-enrollment of UI claimants makes the widest possible array of services available without duplication of resources and creates an automatic link between the UI and workforce system. Claimants are scheduled for an initial staff assisted enrolling service as early as possible in the claims cycle; at maximum within two (2) weeks from the date the claimant information is available for scheduling in the Workforce Scheduler. Scheduling, delivery method, and format may be regionally determined, but the Statewide framework encourages conducting one-on-one interviews to provide the highest level of customer service, if possible.

Seamless delivery of the Wagner-Peyser and UI programs in the State with merit staff continuing to help UI recipients get back to work by providing comprehensive reemployment services through the Career Center System has been and will continue to be a successful model for NYS.

UI claimants on Temporary Layoff (TLO) and/or union workers with exclusive union hiring arrangements must be individually assessed to verify status before any work search exemption is allowed. If excused from work search, all claimants must be provided with information regarding the full range of services available in the System. UI claimants identified as work search exempt

based on a temporary and/or seasonal loss of employment are to be scheduled for a staff assisted service, if still certifying for benefits beyond the anticipated return to work date.

The service design for UI claimants subject to work search requirements must minimally include:

- A description of the full range of services available through the System and how services can be accessed;
- An initial assessment, including a basic review of the individual's work history, skills, training, education, career objective, and any self-identified service needs/requests for accommodation (the initial assessment should be used to inform decisions on next steps such as scheduling additional services and/or targeting for follow-up services);
- Information notifying claimants of their work search-related responsibilities including advisement that failure to report for scheduled reemployment services may impact their continuing eligibility for benefits;
- A complete, up-to-date, OSOS case management record that will support program enrollments, effective job matching, and referrals; and
- A Comprehensive Assessment, when it is determined that the customer needs individualized career services. Such services may be needed to address barriers to employment; establish an employment/occupational goal that is relevant to the local labor market; and/or identify deficiencies in occupational knowledge, skills, strengths, and abilities that can be rectified through skills development and training. This leads to the development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP).

UI customer caseload management strategies are in place to ensure that UI Reemployment Services customers receive ongoing services following the initial service. If the UI claimant continues to certify for benefits, each claimant must receive additional staff assisted services within 90-day intervals of the initial enrolling service. Potential UI issues are tracked and reported to NYSDOL's Unemployment Insurance Division (NYSDOL/UID) in a timely manner.

In accordance with NYS's functional alignment policy, OSOS is accessible by both Employment Services (ES) and WIOA partner staff based on functional assignment. Any/all staff providing reemployment services to UI customers have access to the comprehensive case management data available for all UI customers via OSOS, as needed, to eliminate duplication of effort and facilitate effective, streamlined service to the customer.

Individuals whose initial assessment determines a need for additional services are referred quickly to training or System partners for supportive services to address barriers to reemployment.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

In accordance with NYS's functional alignment policy, OSOS is accessible by both Employment Services (ES) and WIOA partner staff based on functional assignment. Any/all staff providing reemployment services to UI customers have access to the comprehensive case management data available for all UI customers via OSOS, as needed, to eliminate duplication of effort and facilitate effective, streamlined service to the customer.

Individuals whose initial assessment determines a need for additional services are referred quickly to training or System partners for supportive services to address barriers to reemployment.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker (DW) programs. Co-enrollment of UI claimants makes the widest possible array of services available without duplication of resources and creates an automatic link between the UI and workforce system. Claimants are scheduled for an initial staff assisted enrolling service as early as possible in the claims cycle; at maximum within two (2) weeks from the date the claimant information is available for scheduling in the Workforce Scheduler. Scheduling, delivery method and format may be regionally determined, but the Statewide framework encourages conducting one-on-one interviews to provide the highest level of customer service, if possible.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

The service design for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants subject to work search requirements must minimally include:

- A description of the full range of services available through the System and how services can be accessed;
- An initial assessment, including a basic review of the individual's work history, skills, training, education, career objective, and any self-identified service needs/requests for accommodation (the initial assessment should be used to inform decisions on next steps such as scheduling additional services and/or targeting for follow-up services);
- Information notifying claimants of their work search related responsibilities including advisement that failure to report for scheduled reemployment services may impact their continuing eligibility for benefits;
- A complete, up-to-date, OSOS case management record that will support program enrollments, effective job matching, and referrals; and
- A Comprehensive Assessment when it is determined that the customer needs individualized career services. Such services may be needed to address barriers to employment; establish an employment/occupational goal that is relevant to the local labor market; and/or identify deficiencies in occupational knowledge, skills, strengths, and abilities that can be rectified through skills development and training. This leads to the development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP).

UI customer caseload management strategies are in place to ensure that UI Reemployment Services customers receive ongoing services following the initial service. If the UI claimant continues to certify for benefits, each claimant must receive additional staff assisted services within 90-day intervals of the initial enrolling service.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Under the NYS WIOA Interagency Team, a Referral and Release Workgroup was formed to develop a seamless referral process among System partners as well as the development of a confidential

release of information form. TA #19-01: Release of Information between Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Partner Programs provides a universal release of information form. Training was provided to all stakeholders on methods of referring individuals and each local area developed local policies and procedures on referring customers. Title I local level staff have developed their forms based on the TA to support quality referrals.

Individuals whose initial assessment determines a need for additional services are referred quickly to training or System partners for supportive services to address barriers to reemployment.

Staff serving Title III customers are well versed in training opportunities in their local area. Through Career Center staff meetings and WIOA training seminars, staff are provided information on how to assist customers in applying for training and educational assistance as well as funding opportunities. By providing seamless services, customers are assessed and enrolled in local training programs such as English language classes, High School Equivalency classes, WIOA funded training, and On-the-Job Training.

e. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP)

Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

NYSDOL's Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) is compiled by the Division of Compliance and Education (DOCE). The AOP details the activities planned for providing services and outreach to both domestic Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs), H-2A foreign guest workers and Agricultural businesses for the period of July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2028, and is prepared in accordance with WIOA Section 167 and Unified Planning Guidance.

The goal of the AOP is to describe the strategies the DOCE Agriculture Labor Program (AgLP) will use in the coming Program Year (PY) to provide services to MSFWs in the field through outreach, which must be quantitatively proportional and qualitatively equivalent to those provided to non-MSFWs in the NYS Career Center System. The AOP also aims to detail how services will be delivered to agricultural businesses to assist them in filling vacant jobs with the available, domestic labor supply. The AgLP is committed to ensuring that domestic farmworkers and H-2A foreign guest workers are aware of services available to them; that they understand their rights; and that they know how labor laws protect them.

For PY 2024, NYS has been designated as one of the top 20 states among the highest MSFW participants by USDOL-ETA. As a result of this designation, NYS must meet all Equity Ratio Indicators (ERIs) and at least four (4) of the seven (7) Minimum Service Level Indicators (MSLIs).

In addition to meeting the aforementioned indicators, NYS must have full-time outreach staff dedicated to outreach activities throughout the PY. During the winter months (November to March), when fewer migrants are in NYS, the staff will focus on seasonal workers and employers in their region.

Assessment of Need

(i) NYS Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Characteristics and MSFW Needs

Typical Characteristics of MSFWs in NYS:

- Predominantly Spanish Speaking and/or English Language Learners (ELL);
- Common countries of origin include Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Haiti;
- U.S. born domestic workers include workers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and Puerto Rico;
- Common languages include Spanish, Haitian Creole, and indigenous languages from Central America;
- Farmworkers can be MSFW, seasonal, or year-round workers, depending on the commodity;
- Approximately 5,622 Domestic MSFWs formed part of AgLP's known seasonal workforce in PY 2024;
- Approximately 9,933 H-2A work visas were requested in PY 2024 under the seasonal foreign guest worker program, under 874 distinct job order requests; and
- Approximately 3,766 year-round farmworkers were employed in seasonal or mostly agricultural operations known to the AgLP.

Farmworkers, including MSFWs, have similar needs to other immigrant, refugee, and low-wage worker populations, including:

- Flexible hours for accessible services as agricultural work hours do not always coincide with typical business hours;
- Assistance with transportation;
- Assistance with language barriers; and
- Assistance with finding work in agriculture by word-of-mouth and friends/neighbors.

In NYS, domestic farmworkers tend to be workers who work at area farms seasonally. In the off-season, domestic workers may find other temporary jobs or will wait to be called back by their previous agricultural employer.

(ii) A review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the NYS:

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in NYS, providing food for NYS consumers and employment for many of its residents. Crops grown across NYS are diverse and include a variety of fruits, root vegetables, and plant/nursery stock.

Throughout PY 2024 and previous PYs, the AgLP recorded information on the specific crops grown on farms staff visited and provided vital data demonstrating the best time of year to visit certain farms based on the crops grown at that location. The most heavily produced crops requiring MSFW labor in NYS are apples, cabbage, sweet corn, potatoes, and grapes. While agriculture activity may take place most months of the year, seasonal tasks and an increase in the workforce prompt AgLP's field work to take place during peak agricultural activity for those crops; thus, over 90% of the AgLP's field activity takes place between April and the end of October.

Data compiled by NYSDOL includes:

PY 2024 AgLP Field Visit Activity Year-Round

Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025
11.20 %	10.84%	11.33%	10.72%	6.02%	2.29%	1.20%	3.37%	4.94%	13.25%	12.41%	12.41%

(iii) A review of the previous year's MSFW activity in NYS:

NYSDOL outreach staff create regional outreach plans (ROPs) which are a six (6)-month plans for how outreach and compliance will be conducted. Staff continue to complete in-person outreach as well as telephonic. In reviewing the 2024 ROPs, the field staff focused on seasonal operations as the priority. In PY 2024, AgLP staff visited small, medium, and large farm operations, including seasonal and year-round workforces. The goal was to reach as many of the seasonal farmworkers and H-2A foreign guest workers in NYS as possible. During PY 2024, AgLP staff performed outreach education to a total of 1,931 Domestic MSFWs; 6,629 H-2A foreign guest workers; and 1,205 year-round farmworkers.

PY 2024 AgLP Contact Estimates	
Report Start Date:	7/1/2024
Report End Date:	6/30/2025
Number of Outreach Contacts in the Region:	**TOTAL**
Number of Employer/Manager Staff Contacted this Period:	1852
Number of Domestic MSFWs Contacted this Period:	1931
Number of H-2As Contacted this Period:	6629
Number of Year-Round Farmworkers Contacted this Period:	1205
Number of NGOs/Service Providers Contacted this Period:	359

To capture seasonal agricultural operations, farmworkers' workforce, and plan field activity, the AgLP used data from the program's Farm Lists, which is collected for each region by AgLP staff.

The PY 2024 estimates for NYSDOL field activity are:

PY 2024 Estimates for NYSDOL's AgLP Field Visit Activity				
County	**Number of Farms**	**Planned Field Visits**	**Executed Field Visits**	**Difference (Executed - Planned)**
Albany	14	14	14	0
Allegany	0	0	0	0
Bronx	0	0	0	0

Broome	3	3	3	0
Cattaraugus	10	7	5	-2
Cayuga	14	11	10	-1
Chautauqua	23	27	23	-4
Chemung	0	0	0	0
Chenango	4	6	5	-1
Clinton	15	19	20	1
Columbia	34	44	38	-6
Cortland	2	3	2	-1
Delaware	4	2	0	-2
Dutchess	19	17	11	-6
Erie	31	42	37	-5
Essex	3	5	5	0
Franklin	2	3	3	0
Fulton	2	1	1	0
Genesee	18	31	21	-10
Greene	7	8	5	-3
Hamilton	0	0	0	0
Herkimer	2	2	0	-2
Jefferson	4	5	4	-1
Kings	0	0	0	0
Lewis	2	1	1	0
Livingston	3	4	4	0
Madison	5	7	8	1
Monroe	15	22	16	-6
Montgomery	3	1	2	1
Nassau	2	1	1	0
New York	0	0	0	0
Niagara	29	34	33	-1
Oneida	8	11	7	-4

Onondaga	20	18	17	-1
Ontario	14	16	13	-3
Orange	74	60	47	-13
Orleans	35	62	48	-14
Oswego	16	21	19	-2
Otsego	4	3	1	-2
Putnam	2	0	0	0
Queens	0	0	0	0
Rensselaer	11	10	9	-1
Richmond	0	0	0	0
Rockland	2	2	1	-1
Saint Lawrence	4	4	4	0
Saratoga	6	3	3	0
Schenectady	3	1	1	0
Schoharie	8	4	7	3
Schuyler	13	11	7	-4
Seneca	20	17	12	-5
Steuben	12	9	5	-4
Suffolk	196	114	62	-52
Sullivan	3	1	0	-1
Tioga	3	2	2	0
Tompkins	10	10	8	-2
Ulster	52	45	34	-11
Warren	1	1	1	0
Washington	9	3	5	2
Wayne	99	128	88	-40
Westchester	6	7	6	-1
Wyoming	7	16	10	-6
Yates	34	21	16	-5

2. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE: 1) IDENTIFY THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFY ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE.

2.1. IDENTIFY THE TOP FIVE LABOR INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in NYS, providing food for NYS consumers and employment for many of its residents. Crops grown across NYS are diverse and include a variety of fruits, root vegetables, and plant/nursery stock. Most of NYS's MSFW population work on crops which many are of a seasonal nature. The top five (5) crops are apples, cabbage, sweet corn, potatoes, and grapes.

Apples

The top five (5) apple-growing counties in NYS are Wayne, Ulster, Orleans, Niagara, and Clinton. Apples are harvested from August to end of October, but in areas of NYS with milder temperatures, harvesting can be extended through mid-November.

Cabbage

Cabbage is grown everywhere in NYS but the most is produced in the Western New York and Finger Lakes regions. Traditionally planted in April, it can be harvested from mid-June through end of November.

Sweet Corn

Fresh market sweet corn is grown throughout all agricultural regions of NYS, with significant production in Chautauqua, Columbia, Delaware, Erie, Monroe, Niagara, Rockland, Onondaga, Ontario, Orange, Rensselaer, Suffolk, Ulster, and Washington Counties. The harvest season from sweet corn runs from August 1st through September 30th, but in areas of NYS with milder temperatures, it can run through October 15th.

Potatoes

Potatoes are grown in most of the vegetable production regions of NYS. Areas with significant production include Long Island (Suffolk County), northern NYS (Franklin County), central NYS (Oswego, Steuben, Wayne, Ontario, Oneida, and Livingston counties), and western NYS (Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Orleans, and Wyoming counties). Potato harvesting starts as early as July for some fresh market crops, but most are harvested between late August and October.

Grapes

Grapes are grown in the Lake Erie area, Long Island, Finger Lakes, and the Hudson Valley regions. Specific counties of note include Chautauqua, Chenango, Suffolk, Seneca, Cayuga, and Orange. Grapes are harvested during short two (2)-week intervals between late August through October.

Geographic Area of Prime Activity; Approximate Workforce at Peak (Seasonal Operations)

NYS's agriculture diversity include year-round operations and operations that have a seasonal component, such as the growing and harvesting of crops. Many of NYS's seasonal operations can be

found along the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes, the Hudson River corridor, North Country, and Long Island's east end. The top counties with prime seasonal agricultural activity include:

PY 2024 Prime Seasonal Activity Approximate Workforce at Peak (Seasonal Operations)					
County	**Number of Farms**	**Domestic MSFW Est.**	**H-2A Est.**	**Year-Round Est.**	**Total Workforce Est.**
Suffolk	196	1783	295	1165	3243
Wayne	99	419	2362	334	3115
Orleans	35	224	1392	252	1868
Ulster	52	512	616	100	1228
Orange	74	341	490	328	1159
Genesee	18	298	617	226	1141
Erie	31	273	200	414	887
Clinton	15	47	719	42	808
Columbia	34	158	424	81	663
Niagara	29	243	224	43	510
Cayuga	14	21	325	114	460
Monroe	15	66	304	44	414

2.2. SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE)

Securing an experienced and dependable workforce is among the top concerns for NYS growers and farmers. The challenge is more pronounced at seasonal agricultural operations who used to rely on the traditional migrant stream of workers coming from other states. Some factors to the reductions include some migrants settling in the area and moving out of agriculture; lack of domestic workers willing to perform continuous extraneous physical manual labor for wages bordering the minimum wage rate; employer's inability to offer year-round work; and U.S. Immigration Customs & Enforcement (ICE) increased enforcement. There continues to be increases in H-2A guestworker program participants while field staff report decreases in the local domestic workforce due to a lack of available domestic workforce. Farmers continue to face challenges of balancing the cost of production, including labor, with the price received for food products.

This information is reflected in the data provided below by NYSDOL's Office of Workforce Development (NYSDOL/OWD) Foreign Labor Certification Unit (FLCU). Please note, the numbers from October, November, and December 2024 are atypical. Historically the applications which were filed in December 2024 were also spread out amongst October and November 2024. However, due to changing federal regulations, many job orders which were initially processed in October and November 2024 were denied by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Chicago National Processing Center and had to be refiled in December. As a result, the October and November numbers only reflect the job orders which were fully processed and did not have to be refiled in December 2024. Those job orders which were refiled in December 2024 are only reflected in the December 2024 numbers, so as to avoid counting job orders and workers twice.

PY 2024	H-2A job orders	Workers requested
Jul-24	35	597
Aug-24	12	145
Sep-24	13	104
Oct-24	13	60
Nov-24	4	24
Dec-24	192	609
Jan-25	180	1601
Feb-25	87	500
Mar-25	69	619
Apr-25	50	724
May-25	77	1588
Jun-25	142	3362
TOTALS:	**874**	**9933**

2.3. IDENTIFY ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE.

The November 2024 report "A Profile of Agriculture in New York State," issued by NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli summarized the current and projected challenges facing farmers as including the effect of international conflicts on commodity prices, domestic commodity price fluctuation due to federally set prices, increasing labor costs, and unpredictable weather due to climate change, particularly flooding and heat stress resulting from warming temperatures. The Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act (FLFLPA) continues to impact agriculture in NYS. This Act, which took effect in 2020, required farm workers to receive overtime pay for more than 60 hours worked in a calendar week and requires one (1) day (24 consecutive hours) of rest per calendar week. Workers who chose to work on their day of rest must receive the overtime rate for those hours. In addition, the Act permits farmworkers to engage in concerted union activity, including taking part in a union. In 2023, additional provisions were adopted that will further decrease the overtime threshold. In 2024, the threshold of hours was reduced to 56 hours, and will further decrease by four (4) hours every two (2) years; ending with a 40-hour overtime threshold in 2032. There are other provisions of the Act, but the main factors directly impacting agriculture labor are noted above.

Weather is a variable that has a major impact on agriculture, where a sudden drop in temperature or a hailstorm can bring catastrophic loses to farmers. In July and August 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued multiple disaster declarations for counties in NYS due to high winds and excessive rain. Drought also posed a challenge in NYS in PY 2024. From November 2024 to January 2025, the

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation had a drought watch in place for 15 NYS counties. A drought watch was again instituted in September 2025 and then escalated to a drought warning. Except for Westchester County and New York City, the entire State was listed in a drought status in the fall of 2025. Farms that had irrigation capacity were able to have a crop, however, the cost of production increased. Some farms were not able to mitigate for this change in weather and faced financial losses.

This season another challenge affecting agriculture in NYS has been increased fears of U.S. ICE activities. Farmworkers have been fearful of interacting with governmental authorities, regardless of whether they are local, state, or federal representatives. Farmworkers fear being detained and removed from the United States and as a result, are hesitant to make their presence known. It has also made them fearful of travelling on public roads or frequenting businesses, so as to avoid encountering law enforcement officials. This has resulted in farmworkers not traveling to work and their labor becoming more inconsistent and unreliable. It has also become a great psychological and emotional stressor within the farmworker community.

3. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS BY SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION.

Typical Characteristics of MSFWs in NYS:

- Predominantly Spanish Speaking and/or ELL;
- Common countries of origin include Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Haiti;
- U.S. born domestic workers include workers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and Puerto Rico;
- Common languages include Spanish, Haitian Creole, and indigenous languages from Central America;
- Farmworkers are MSFW, seasonal, and year-round workers depending on the commodity; and
- Approximately 9,449 farm workers are H-2A visa foreign guest workers.

Farmworkers, including MSFWs, have similar needs to other immigrant, refugee, and low-wage worker populations, including:

- Flexible hours for accessible services as agricultural work hours do not always coincide with typical business hours;
- Assistance with transportation;
- Assistance with language barriers; and
- Assistance with finding work in agriculture by word-of-mouth and friends/neighbors.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWS in the state and to locate and contact MSFWS who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the state agency's proposed strategies for:

4.1. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

(i) Staff conducting outreach

For PY 2024 there were up to eight (8) bilingual AgLS field staff members (Compliance and Education Specialists (CES)) and three (3) AgLS supervisors (Compliance and Education Supervisors (Supervisors)) who conducted full-time outreach to MSFWs. The CES are stationed in NYS Career Centers close to high populations of agricultural workers, except for one stationed in NYSDOL's Central Office in Albany.

For those staff members who are not located in offices deemed significant by USDOL ETA, the AgLP worked with NYSDOL/OWD to ensure the AgLS can have workspace in a "significant office". This will ensure MSFWs can reach an AgLS from almost anywhere in NYS on any given day. Because the staff is strategically located close to MSFW populations, the goal has been and continues to be to reach as many of the estimated 30,000 farmworkers in NYS each year. Likewise, an objective of the AgLP is to visit farms with an MSFW workforce twice during the season to provide outreach services to MSFWs working on the farm during the harvest season that may not have been there earlier in the year, during the planting season.

The Patchogue Career Center is one such significant office where DOCE faces challenges in staffing. During PY 2024 there was a slowdown in outreach caused by the departure of the assigned CES for this office and the hiring and training of a new CES. However, their assignments to the Patchogue office overlapped, so there was never a lapse in coverage during PY 2024. This position has recently become vacant again and DOCE is in the process of filling it.

DOCE also has a Community Education Program with one (1) bilingual CES based in Brooklyn, NY, who supports the AgLS program as needed, in particular the Long Island region. DOCE also has a Communications and Language Access Specialist based in Johnson City, NY. Additionally, the Director and Deputy Director will also conduct outreach throughout PYs 2024-2027.

(ii) Tools used to conduct outreach

To reach MSFWs, as well as year-round agricultural workers in PY 2025, AgLP staff will use several tools:

- The primary delivery method is in-person interaction with workers. Staff travel to farms multiple days each week to meet with MSFWs in-person and provide them with a direct presentation outlining important labor law information, State and community services, worker rights, and online resources relevant to their rights; supportive services available to them in the community; and employment-related services available at the Career Centers across NYS. A limited number of printed NYSDOL publications are provided to the workers, while online versions of those documents are shared via QR codes, email, or text.

- Each AgLS staff member is equipped with mobile technology, including a laptop, cell phone, and iPad, making the AgLS program accessible to MSFWs even when they are not at the Career Center.
- The NYSDOL publications shared with MSFWs include fact sheets, information on other agencies serving MSFWs in the community (Community Resource Guides),and contact information for the AgLP staff. The following documents are included in the basic outreach packet for MSFWs (non-foreign guest workers) shared via paper or QR code:
    - NYSDOL/DOCE services (in English and Spanish);
    - NYSDOL/DOCE AgLP Contact List;
    - NYSDOL General Services (in English and Spanish);
    - NYSDOL's NYS Career Center Locations (contains address and phone number);
    - NYSDOL Protection for Farmworkers (in English and Spanish);
    - Farmworker Fact Sheet (in English and Spanish); and
    - Community Resource Guide.

Packets also contain a field registration form for workers seeking services through NYSDOL. In addition, the staff tailors worker packets by adding specific information regarding workshop and training opportunities available at local Career Centers, as applicable.

When applicable, staff also provides outreach services at various events across NYS, including:

- Mexican Consulate events throughout the year; and
- Outreach events with other farmworker-serving agencies, such as Pathstone and SunRiver Health.

4.2. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED LAW COMPLAINT SYSTEM ("COMPLAINT SYSTEM" DESCRIBED AT 20 CFR 658 SUBPART E), INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWS IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

Technical Assistance to outreach staff is provided by NYSDOL/OWD, DOCE, and other State/federal worker protection divisions. Technical Advisories are shared with all NYSDOL staff as appropriate. DOCE will also request training on employment services as needed for outreach staff. Additionally, DOCE is working on further developing its internal protocols and providing technical training as needed. At a minimum, DOCE will train staff on all program areas on a rolling basis.

During PY 2024, AgLP staff received training on the following:

- Laws governing the employment of minors;
- The difference between apparent violations and complaints;
- Standards of procedure for internal logs;

- H-2A Program;
- Monitor Advocate System;
- Housing walk-throughs;
- Signs and responses to human trafficking;
- Understanding wage orders in mixed operations of farming and other industries;
- Preparing for and conducting outreach;
- Reviewing payroll records;
- Updates to NYS Labor Law (such as FLFLPA, paid sick leave accruals, etc.); and
- Complaint Referral Process.

Agricultural business-based advocates are also a focus. NYSDOL will continue to nurture relationships with organizations like NY Farm Bureau, NYS Agriculture & Markets, NY Apple Association, Agriculture Affiliates, Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Cornell Agriculture Workforce Development Program, and Cornell Cooperative Extension to ensure businesses are apprised of their rights and responsibilities. DOCE staff regularly present at employer forums, such as The Becker Forum and Cornell Cooperative Extension's Labor Road Show. The presentations typically cover new information important to growers, such as FLFLPA and paid sick leave regulations, as well as standard information of regular interest to growers, such as the H-2A program and Career Center services.

4.3. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

Staff capacity building is a NYS priority. Professional development activities for outreach staff are provided through conference calls, training webinars, video conferencing, and 'Train the Trainer' workshops. In addition to live training provided by experts, staff resource guides are available on the NYSDOL internet and intranet site. Training and guides are updated regularly to provide current laws and changes in regulations and implementation procedures. Training includes such topics as assisting Unemployment Insurance (UI) customers in the Career Center and identifying and reporting UI issues, as well as escalating UI issues as needed. Staff also participate in Career Center meetings to learn of updates to the UI processes and system.

4.4. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

DOCE provides annual training to staff, which focuses on providing better employment and labor law compliance services in innovative ways. As always, we will also continue to review the quarterly 5148 data to determine if the training has helped with reporting requirements. DOCE will continue to ensure that field staff are appropriately trained to ensure proper documentation of services provided to all farmworkers. Past trainings are detailed above in Section VI.e.4.B.

4.5. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

In PY 2024, AgLP field staff continued to work closely with NYS's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, PathStone Corporation. NYSDOL and PathStone executed a non-financial cooperative agreement on July 26, 2024. NYSDOL will comply with the cooperative agreement requirements. PathStone and AgLP field staff completed multiple joint field outreach visits across NYS in PY 2024.

The AgLP also continued the long-standing relationship with SunRiver Health (formerly Hudson River Health) by maintaining a presence at the Farmworker Community Center in Goshen, NY (also known as The Alamo). The Community Center is in the heart of the black dirt region and is regularly visited by farmworkers. AgLP field staff provided direct services and information to farmworkers and agricultural businesses approximately two (2) days per week at the Farmworker Community Center. This will continue to expand as we further develop additional services that farmworkers can access through SunRiver Health.

The AgLP has a similar long-lasting relationship with Tomorrow's Promise (previously known as the North Fork Spanish Apostolate) in Riverhead. NY. This organization is located between the Long Island forks, where much of the agricultural activity begins to take place. A lack of coverage occurred due a vacant field staff position for part of PY 2024; however, the AgLP has reestablished relationships with Tomorrow's Promise. AgLP staff provide direct services and information to workers that come to the organization for services, including farmworkers. For both the Farmworker Community Center and Tomorrow's Promise locations, NYSDOL staff presence provides much needed outreach and assistance to workers who would not typically visit the nearest NYS Career Center.

The AgLP will continue to build and grow connections with farmworker advocates like Worker Justice Center, Alianza Agricola, Rural Migrant Ministries, Finger Lakes Community Health, Cornell Farmworker Program, ABCD Daycare Centers, Migrant Health, and Migrant Ed. Additionally, staff will continue to work with networks of farmworker service providers to ensure that they are aware of NYSDOL services available and how DOCE can assist with labor law concerns. Coordination with the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, which offers critical on-farm health and safety trainings is ongoing.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

i. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

ii. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

i. Services Provided to MSFWs through the Career Centers

The goal of outreach is to contact MSFWs who are not reached by the normal intake activities of the NYS Career Centers. The AgLS field staff provide outreach services to farmworkers outside of the physical Career Center, which may include farm field sites, labor camps, grocery stores, and churches. The AgLS field staff explain the services that can be accessed at the local Career Center and educates the farmworkers on their rights and responsibilities under NYS labor law. Regarding employment services, the AgLP field staff encourage farmworkers to visit the nearest NYS Career Center to explore the career services available to them.

AgLS provide the following services to farmworker through outreach:

- Information on registering for employment services which include access to workshops, employment resources, and training opportunities;
- Information on services available through PathStone Corporation (WIOA 167 grantee);
- Information on training services such as High School Equivalency, English as a Second Language, and basic education available through the Career Center (virtual) and other services provided in the community;
- Details on applying for UI, if applicable;
- Health care, transportation, and childcare services available in the local area;
- Information about NYS and federal labor laws and their enforcement;
- Appropriate channels for filing complaints through the Employment Services Complaint System (ES Complaint System); and
- Resolution of "apparent violations" observed or uncovered by the AgLS during their outreach visit.

Providing these services to farmworkers increases the likelihood of farmworkers becoming more competitive in the local, regional, and national economy, and enables them to use acquired skills to transition to employment in the non-agricultural sector if they so choose.

Services Provided to Agricultural Businesses through the Career Centers

Providing services to agricultural businesses in NYS is extremely important because farms require a reliable workforce to ensure the products they grow can be planted, cultivated, and harvested in a time and manner that guarantees the highest quality product reaches consumers. The AgLS provide many services to employers, including updating them on compliance with State and federal labor laws and ensuring they have the most current posters, forms, and guides. To best achieve this goal, staff contact employers before the busy season begins to offer compliance information, answer questions, and obtain updates regarding the employer's intended workforce. AgLP staff also provides the following business services to Agricultural Employers:

- Assistance in recruiting domestic labor;
- Matching workers' skills and experience to business needs and available positions;
- Answering questions about recruiting and registering workers;
- Referrals for labor laws and compliance issues;
- Labor market data; and

- Grower incentives, including the farmworker tax credit, and other incentives (housing funding, etc.) upon request.

Additionally, NYSDOL is in the process of re-executing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH). The prior MOU eliminated duplicative migrant labor camp pre-occupancy and occupancy inspections, which would have otherwise been required by both agencies. The updated MOU aligns with FLFLPA regulations, which now require NYSDOH to inspect all seasonal labor camps with an occupancy of one (1) or more migrant workers. This MOU will continue to allow NYSDOL to accept NYSDOH inspections for H-2A purposes; hence eliminating the potential for duplicative inspections by both agencies. Eliminating duplicative inspections is both an effective use of staff time and lessens the burden on H-2A employers.

In PY 2025, the AgLP will continue to focus on providing agricultural businesses the domestic labor they need to succeed in this important industry. The AgLP will continue the "Labor Needs" project that began in PY 2013 to determine exactly what the businesses in NYS are looking for in their workforce and the time of year they will most likely need workers. The Agricultural Job Order Form provides an opportunity for the agricultural business to place a local job order with the AgLP field staff. The AgLP field staff then enter the information into OSOS, and the job order becomes active on the NYS Job Bank, becoming visible to potential workers on the Internet. The AgLP field staff are also uniquely situated to know of potential workers who might be interested in the employer's job opening. To supplement this effort, an annual training will be provided to field staff in which they will be retrained on taking a Career Center Customer Registration Form (ES100) and registering customers from the field and offering in-person, on-site job referral services.

While conducting field visits and outreach to MSFWs, the AgLP staff also speak with agricultural businesses and provide information on services available to them. Just as there are publications tailored towards workers, the staff also have employer publications. These employer publications have been offered to employers during the Labor Needs calls, so they have them in real time. The AgLS can send them via email or QR code during an in-person visit. Additionally, AgLP staff develop and implement various trainings for farm labor contractors and agricultural employers. The goal of the written materials and information sessions is to promote an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of employers, as well as the rights and services available to farmworkers. Through online webinars; recorded training sessions posted on our website with direct links to video hosting sites, such as YouTube; in-person workshops; and the distribution of written information along with employer-specific packets, AgLP staff have provided educational material at events such as:

- Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development's Virtual Office Hour; and
- New York Labor Roadshow hosted by the Ag Workforce Development Council of NYS.

The AgLP field staff craft their regional outreach plans twice a year; first for January through June and then again for July through December. Prior to the harvest season, AgLP field staff contact businesses to discuss their anticipated labor needs for the growing and harvesting season.

B. MARKETING THE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

The ES Complaint System is discussed with farmworkers as part of general outreach and is also discussed in PowerPoint presentations given to all workers. Furthermore, all customers entering any NYS Career Centers will find 11x14 posters with the State Monitor Advocate's contact information for complaints, and ES Complaint System flyers are shared with advocates and other partners.

The ES Complaint system is also discussed with workers when they reach out to AgLP staff to discuss possible violations of labor law. Workers seeking to file formal complaints are assisted with completing the complaint form and the AgLP field staff forward the form to the appropriate enforcement office. Where workers do not want to file formal complaints, the AgLP field staff work with businesses to discuss potential violations and resolve them using a compliance-based model of business cooperation.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

When the AgLP field staff contact businesses to discuss their labor needs for the growing and harvesting season, they discuss the agricultural recruitment system (ARS) as a possible way to obtain the necessary labor for the business. The AgLP continue to contact businesses throughout the season and will continue to offer ARS as a possible option for their labor needs. The overall trend the past few seasons has shifted interest away from local job orders to the H-2A guest worker program to meet the businesses' labor needs. The AgLP staff continue to discuss local job orders as a possible solution to short term labor needs and businesses will occasionally submit job orders.

The AgLP will also work in conjunction with Career Center Managers and staff to determine the need for the increased publicity of the ARS. DOCE will further work to create additional opportunities for employer outreach through organizations such as the Cornell Cooperative Extension, where the ARS will be promoted as a way to hire domestic labor.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

In PY 2024, AgLP field staff continued to work closely with NYS's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, PathStone Corporation. NYSDOL and PathStone executed a non-financial cooperative agreement on July 26, 2024. NYSDOL will comply with the cooperative agreement requirements. PathStone and AgLP field staff completed multiple joint field outreach visits across NYS this PY.

T AgLP also continued the long-standing relationship with SunRiver Health (formerly Hudson River Health) by maintaining a presence at the Farmworker Community Center in Goshen, NY (also known as The Alamo). The Community Center is in the heart of the black dirt region and is regularly visited by farmworkers. AgLP field staff provided direct services and information to farmworkers and agricultural businesses approximately two (2) days per week at the Farmworker Community

Center. This will continue to expand as we further develop additional services that farmworkers can access through SunRiver Health.

The AgLP has a similar long-lasting relationship with Tomorrow's Promise (previously known as the North Fork Spanish Apostolate) in Riverhead. NY. This organization is located between the Long Island forks, where much of the agricultural activity begins to take place. A lack of coverage occurred due a vacant field staff position for part of PY 2024; however, the AgLP has reestablished relationships with Tomorrow's Promise. AgLP staff provide direct services and information to workers that come to the organization for services, including farmworkers. For both the Farmworker Community Center and Tomorrow's Promise locations, NYSDOL staff presence provides much needed outreach and assistance to workers who would not typically visit the nearest NYS Career Center.

The AgLP will continue to build and grow connections with farmworker advocates like Worker Justice Center, Alianza Agricola, Rural Migrant Ministries, Finger Lakes Community Health, Cornell Farmworker Program, ABCD Daycare Centers, Migrant Health, and Migrant Ed. Additionally, staff will continue to work with networks of farmworker service providers to ensure that they are aware of NYSDOL services available and how DOCE can assist with labor law concerns. Coordination with the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, which offers critical on-farm health and safety trainings is ongoing.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons; therefore, and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

i. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The draft of this AOP was made available to the groups listed below and they were given a 30-day window to provide feedback and comments. The following groups and organizations were invited directly to share their input and comments:

- Cornell Cooperative Extension;
- New York Farm Bureau;
- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets;
- PathStone Corporation;

- Worker Justice Center of New York;
- The International Institute of Buffalo; and
- Cornell Farmworker Program.

Comments were provided by: ....(TBD).

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

NYS met all five (5) MSLIs in PY 2024. NYS completed the timely processing of complaints by processing, resolving, and/or referring the complaint to the appropriate enforcement agency and the State processing and resolution of complaints aligned with the timeframe for non-MSFWS of 15-days and five (5)-days for MSFWS. No field checks were indicated in PY 2024, but DOCE staff is trained on this topic, and job orders are regularly reviewed for placements that would require a field check to be completed. The AgLP attained the contacts per week indicator by scheduling field visits for three (3) out of the five (5) days per week during peak harvest season for their respective territories. In PY 2024, on-site significant offices and Career Center were reviewed and there were no findings against them.

Overall, NYSDOL met program goals. Innovative outreach was conducted throughout NYS, services were rendered on the farm to businesses and workers, and apparent violations were addressed or referred. Employment services were provided to eligible workers, and employers were educated on Career Center services available to businesses. NYSDOL continued to fill open field spots, placing an additional staff member in the Buffalo office.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

The NYS AOP outlines strategies to provide quality service to MSFWs and strategies that support DOCE's compliance education focus to businesses. The outreach approach includes sharing annually updated packets containing relevant information on labor law, know your rights, the ES Complaint system and community resources for workers and labor law, H-2A factsheets, poster material, and more to help agricultural businesses achieve compliance. This season DOCE moved towards primarily sharing these packets via email and QR codes with workers and businesses. DOCE plans to share this information entirely electronically in PY 2025.

Each year, DOCE management develops presentations and fact sheets to launch new education initiatives throughout the season. DOCE has built a vault of knowledge on human trafficking, sexual harassment, updates to NYS Labor Law, identifying and resolving possible violations, conducting housing inspections, and more. This education translates into staff's ability to timely identify and resolve apparent violations. During PY 2023 DOCE identified 895 apparent violations and resolved 617. In PY 2024 DOCE identified 902 apparent violations and resolved 511. Additionally, in PY 2024 DOCE focused on proactively reviewing the wage and hour records of 10% of the workforce of each

business. This demonstrated to DOCE what employers needed further education on and allowed DOCE to bring the employers into compliance for any wage and hour discrepancies observed.

While AgLS staff has been promoting job placement and training services available to MSFWs, many workers do not inquire about these specific services given that the majority are H-2A workers. NYSDOL staff will be provided with refresher training to continue to offer these services and begin proactively detecting outreach encounters where this may be beneficial to the worker. DOCE also plans on re-engaging with the Puerto Rico DOL to promote job opportunities in NYS.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

Belen Ledezma is the NYS Monitor Advocate. She has reviewed and approved this AOP.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (R&S)

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A "baseline" indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, "baseline" indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as "baseline" based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as "baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA." The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as "baseline" for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as "baseline" for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	68.0%	TBD	68.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	69.0%	TBD	69.5%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,800	TBD	$7,900	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed.*

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

a. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

In September 2012, the New York State (NYS) Board of Regents adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) issued by Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) as the State academic standards for adult education in NYS. In 2021, NYS Education Department (NYSED) Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Adult Education Program and Policy (ACCES-AEPP) issued an RFP for WIOA Title II Section grants and contracts that required every funded provider to provide instruction meeting federal CCRS, beginning July 1, 2022.

NYS adopted the CCRS for Adult Education, released in 2013. All instruction and professional development funded under WIOA Title II (as noted in all sections above), as well as the professional development provided by the Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers supported these standards in PY 2024-2025. Full remote access to all training materials, teacher-designed modules, and professional development was supported throughout the program year. Programs were

encouraged to provide ample time for teachers to access training and materials. WIOA awards included provisions for teachers to be paid to attend ample training opportunities surrounding CCRS hosted by the RAENs. In addition, materials, modules, and training videos are available statewide on the ACCES-AEPP-supported websites: www.CollectEdNY.org. In PY 2024, 2,137 teachers attended RAEN sponsored professional development training opportunities. ACCES-AEPP also implemented math bootcamps to target the math General Educational Development (GED) section, as it presented the most difficulty for students.

b. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

WIOA Adult Education and Family Literacy Core Program (Title II) funds will continue to support one of the largest and most diverse State adult education programs in the country. Since 2013, NYSED has dedicated Title II funds to support a comprehensive and coordinated literacy system that

increased the skills of approximately 73,013 Out-of-School (OSY) and adults in adult basic education, adult secondary education and English as a Second Language (ESL).

- Approximately 18% were between the ages of 16 and 24 in FY 2024;
- 30% of adult students enter literacy programs employed;
- 30,066 were unemployed upon entry in FY 2024;
- In terms of the numbers and demographic profile of students served:
- Approximately 258 projects are funded to provide literacy education;
- 78% of students are ESL learners;
- 22% of students are preparing for the high school equivalency exam (HSE);
- Nearly 8M hours of instruction are recorded; and
- 56% of learners moved one or more EFL.

NYSED rebid, through an RFP process, approximately $50M in WIOA Title II funding and $1,843,000 in NYS Welfare Education Program (WEP) funds. Successful awardees are funded for July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027. All awardees must meet WIOA eligibility requirements, with the exception of NYS WEP funds, which are only open to schools and Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

There were four (4) separate competitions:

- $26M in Section 211 funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services;
- $11.3M in Section 243 funding for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE);
- $3.5M in Section 225 funding for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals; and
- $ 9.5M for at least 67 Literacy Zones.

Program Area 1. Funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services was allocated to 33 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) based on the area's percentage of the State's adult population who are under-educated and lack a high school diploma or equivalency, adults in poverty, and the area's percentage of the State's adult population who speak English "less than very well" according to the latest U.S. Census American Community Survey. Competition was for funding within each LWDA, based upon the funds allocated to that area.

The allocation and competitive process for this funding, fully described in Attachment 1 of the RFP Awards, was made to the highest-ranked proposals in each LWDA until the funds allocated were insufficient to fully fund the next ranked proposal with a passing score. The next ranked applicant that received a passing score but could not be funded in full within the LWDA was offered partial funding within the same LWDA. If funds remained after all eligible proposals were awarded within any given LWDA, the remaining funds were added to the amount available for distribution under the Literacy Zone competition.

Funded activities included literacy activities as defined in section 203 (9) and English Language Acquisition as defined in section 203 (6). Integrated Education and Training (IET) was fundable

under this section. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of integrated education and training in order to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

Program Area 2. Funding for Integrated English Language and Civics Education was distributed through a separate Statewide Competition. Individual awards were capped at $400,000 for New York City applicants and $300,000 for applicants elsewhere in the State. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of integrated education and training in order to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

Program Area 3. Funding for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals was distributed through a separate Statewide competition. There was a $250,000 cap for individual awards. (IET), career pathways, concurrent enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism were fundable. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of integrated education and training in order to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

WIOA Program Areas 1, 2, and 3 include a program of instruction that:

- Includes curriculum, lesson plans, and instructional materials aligned with NYSED/OCTAE College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS);
- Offers educational and career counseling service that assist an eligible individual to transition to postsecondary education or employment; and
- Is part of a career pathway.

Program Area 4. Funding for Literacy Zones was distributed based upon a separate Statewide competition. Literacy Zones (https://nys-education-literacy-zones.org/) support case management and interagency coordination in family welcome centers in high poverty communities and communities with high concentrations of limited English speaking adults, and connect eligible individuals with community resources, including instruction funded under Program Areas 1 or 2 of the RFP and programs and services provided by workforce development system partners and in Career Centers.

Only Literacy Zone proposals submitted by applicants that resulted in a grant or grant contract under the previous Program Area 1 and/or Program Area 2 were reviewed. Awards were made to the highest-ranking applications in rank order until funds remaining were insufficient to fund the next ranked proposal in full. The next ranked applicant was given the opportunity to operate a reduced program using the remaining funds in this pool.

Each of the seven (7) RAENs will work with ACCES-AEPP staff, the designated Title II provider on each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), and other funded programs in the LWDA to ensure a constant and timely input on workforce development policy, and implementation and dissemination of information to funded Title II providers.

The RAEN centers are funded to be instrumental in the alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners and support the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. In partnership with ACCES-AEPP regional staff and the National Reporting System (NRS) Accountability Office, the RAENs will provide the technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under Title II as outlined in Section 223 (C), and support the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in adult

education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices in NYS as required by section 223 (D).

1. RAEN centers are funded to provide turn-key training to 2,137 adult education teachers on aligning adult education instruction with rigorous academic standards approved by the NYS Board of Regents through professional development provided through: CUNY developed Teacher Leader Institutes; the filming of effective CCRS instructional modules based on the NYSED/CUNY training; support for the peer review instructional process; and effective use of adult education teacher websites www.TeachingtothecoreNY.org and www.CollectEDNY.org.
2. Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) NRS Student Data and Reporting System: ASISTS is the State performance database system operated by the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC). Since WIOA accountability and reporting requirements were defined in final regulations and agreements reached for data reporting with NYSDOL, NYSED will work with the New York City LAC to change ASISTS to meet WIOA requirements.
3. National External Diploma Program (NEDP): The fourth leadership project is funding the NEDP, a non-traditional, competency based adult learning assessment program which serves as an alternative pathway to high school credentialing.

c. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals was distributed through a separate Statewide competition. Integrated Education and Training (IET), career pathways, concurrent enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism were fundable. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund

the academic component of integrated education and training in order to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

WIOA Program Areas 1, 2, and 3 include a program of instruction that:

- Includes curriculum, lesson plans, and instructional materials aligned with NYSED/OCTAE College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS);
- Offers educational and career counseling service that assist an eligible individual to transition to postsecondary education or employment; and
- Is part of a career pathway.

d. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

$ 11.3M in Section 243 funding for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs that provide training and concurrent contextualized English Literacy instruction leading to employment in high demand occupations ($11.3M). Funding for Integrated English Language and Civics Education was distributed through a separate Statewide Competition. Individual awards were capped at $400,000 for New York City applicants and $300,000 for applicants elsewhere in the State. Per State policy, WIOA Title II funding will only fund the academic component of integrated education and training in order to maximize the leveraging of training dollars.

New York's Title II RFP made a major commitment to integrated education and training and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programming as part of career pathways. NYSED made the policy decision that WIOA Title II funding will not support the training component of these new instructional approaches. It identified significant funding opportunities for training funds including WIOA Title I, Employment Preparation Education State Aid, SUNY and CUNY Full-time Equivalent Aid, tuition, foundation funding, and local funding.

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities. New York State's policy is such that WIOA Title II funds will only support contextualized academic instruction, not the training component. The training component for both Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and Integrated Education and Training will be supported with other local funds.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and Integrated Education and Training programs were reviewed by each LWDB to be certain their plan aligned with the local board priorities. In addition, programs must collaborate with regional workforce partners and New York State Career Center System (American Job Centers) to help address challenges and connect participants to employment opportunities. Funded programs are able to amend/increase additional training credentials annually to meet the local needs of the WDBs.

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA was designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

e. STATE LEADERSHIP

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

Each of the seven (7) RAENs will work with ACCES-AEPP staff, the designated Title II provider on each LWDB, and other funded programs in the LWDA to ensure a constant and timely input on workforce development policy, and implementation and dissemination of information to funded Title II providers.

The RAEN centers are funded to be instrumental in the alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners and support the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. In partnership with ACCES-AEPP regional staff and the NRS accountability office, the RAENs will provide the technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under Title II as outlined in Section 223 (C), and support the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices in NYS as required by section 223 (D).

1. ASISTS NRS Student Data and Reporting System: ASISTS is the State performance database system operated by the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC). Since WIOA accountability and reporting requirements were defined in final regulations and agreements reached for data reporting with NYSDOL, NYSED will work with the New York City LAC to change ASISTS to meet WIOA requirements.
2. National External Diploma Program (NEDP): The fourth leadership project is funding the NEDP, a non-traditional competency based adult learning assessment program which serves as an alternative pathway to high school credentialing.

3. An additional leadership project relates to providing funding for the creation of the high school equivalency exam (HSE). Historically, state funds have exclusively been used for the development of the high school equivalency exam. Since WIOA funds are used to prepare adult learners to take and pass the exam, these funds will also be used to contribute toward the cost of creating the exam. Currently 23% of adult education students receive instruction related to taking the high school equivalency exam.

RAEN centers are funded to provide turn-key training to 2,137 adult education teachers on aligning adult education instruction with rigorous academic standards approved by the NYS Board of Regents through professional development provided through: CUNY developed Teacher Leader Institutes; the filming of effective CCRS/common core instructional modules based on the CUNY training; support for the peer review instructional process; and effective use of adult education teacher websites www.TeachingtothecoreNY.org and www.CollectEDNY.org.

AEPP has also secured turn-key training to all seven (7) RAEN regions in the Student Achievement in Reading (STAR). Beginning FY 2025, each region provides this nationally endorsed Reading Curriculum aligned with CCRS instructional practices.

New activities being implemented fall into seven (7) areas described below. These include:

- The expansion of the range of training Institutes for teachers Statewide;
- Initiation of training in New York City for the large number of metropolitan area teachers emphasizing implementation of the CareerKits; and New York City training targeting improved math pass rates on the HSE exam;
- Support for the completion of the CareerKit project Statewide, including the determination of courses of study and viable certificates at CUNY (to be adapted to SUNY) with labor market value that adult learners at the HSE level (as well as English language learners) might pursue. Labor market study activities, contextualized lesson sets, and recommended resources in ten industry sectors, with assistance in adapting them in the seven (7) RAENs, will be completed for Statewide implementation;
- Continued development and expansion of the www.CollectEdNY.org website, connecting quality teaching resources to content assessed on both the HSED and TABE and getting them into the classrooms of adult educators across the State;
- Continued development and expansion of www.TeachingtotheCore.org;
- Continued expansion of RAEN turnkey training to 2,137 educators across the State assuring Master Teachers are compensated for providing the NYSED/CUNY turn-key training to teachers and volunteers associated with adult literacy programs funded by NYSED; and
- Under the Teacher Support System (TSS) initiative, building a strong connection between NYS's student reporting system, Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) and HSE test scores; diagnostic HSE information; and teaching resources related to CCRS.

f. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the

eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Program's Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) is an ACCES-AEPP-funded, custom built, online-management information system. This system has been used by funded programs in NYS since PY 2007. In addition to serving as the database for all program data related to adult literacy, it also provides reports designed to check for data quality, performance measure, and compliance with NRS. To ensure consistent and continual availability of training support, ASISTS provides a number of training videos, focusing on daily required activities for program data recording and reporting.

NYSED will continue to support a contract for technical assistance, training, and troubleshooting to improve data quality and monitor program performance Statewide. The NRS accountability team funded by this NYSED contract works directly with ACCES-AEPP staff. Duties include focusing on the largest providers with significant enrollments and programs needing intensive technical assistance to achieve improvement. Annually, under the Combined State Plan programs from each RAEN region are selected for inclusion in the Individual Technical Assistance Program (ITAP). The Big 5 city school district programs (New York City, Yonkers, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo) are consistently receiving support from ITAP, given their large size and possible impact on Statewide performance measures. All ITAP programs are desk monitored, accompanied by monthly conference calls and an annual scheduled site visit. All communication and quarterly data analysis is collected electronically and stored on the NYS accountability website in a secure, password protected portal for each program, website: https://adult-education-accountability.org. The portal is accessible by the NRS Office, the ACCES-AEPP Regional staff, the respective RAEN Director, and the program manager.

Each fiscal year, report card data is reviewed by NYSED. In addition to measuring progress toward performance benchmarks, the NYS report cards quartile rank all funded programs. When a program's performance places that program in Quartile 1 and the program has missed one or more of the State benchmarks, the program is placed under Corrective Action. The program is required to submit a program improvement plan and must correspond electronically on the accountability website. Quarterly data reviews are conducted by the NRS Accountability Office and subsequent conference calls and/or web meetings are scheduled with those programs exhibiting poor performance or inconsistent data patterns. The NRS Accountability Office assists in identifying problems and trends on a Statewide and regional level.

Professional development in the areas of data collection, recording, and reporting continues to be a priority. Added to that is the continual need for NRS training at all levels. The Accountability Office will provide a minimum of two (2) training events in each of the seven (7) geographic regions annually. Topics include NRS Foundations, NRS for Teachers, and NYS Report Card Training.

With the exception of the three (3) fiscal years most impacted by the pandemic (FY 2020, FY 2021, FY 2022), all funded agencies receive NYS-issued report cards. The report cards evaluate programs under two (2) distinct methodologies. The first is a standard benchmark measurement. NYS benchmarks for performance in Measurable Skill Gain (MSG), Post Test Rate, and Follow up Outcomes are set each year by ACCES/AEPP based on the averages derived from the prior year's State data. When programs meet all three (3) benchmarks, they are scored as "proficient."

The second method of evaluation is based on a quartile ranking among all programs in the State. In the case of MSG, the program's scores are weighted based on the NRS Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) indicating the strongest proponent for gain as evidence in the data. The weighting of

each EFL is determined by the aggregate data analysis of the prior year's data. The quartiles are determined using the following rubric:

- 40% of the score is from the weighted MSG;
- 20% of the score is from the post-test rate;
- 20% of the score is based on the four (4) follow-up measures; and
- 10% of the score will be based on HSE achievement.

Local program data is entered monthly into ASISTS. Data is reviewed on a quarterly basis:

- Quarter I (7/01-9/30) reviewed by 10/31;
- Quarter II (10/01-12/31) reviewed by 1/31;
- Quarter III (1/01-3/31) reviewed by 4/30; and
- Quarter IV (4/01-6/30) reviewed by 7/31.

Note that the program has until October 31st each year to finalize the annual data submitted over the previous four (4) quarters. It is the responsibility of the program to have data entry up to date for each quarter. ITAP will continue to support those programs presenting with the need for intense technical assistance. ITAPs identify agencies in need of intense technical assistance. The contracted Accountability Office, AEPP Regional staff, and RAEN directors work closely with these programs to identify gaps in quality and performance, and implement an effective program improvement plan. Effective use of webinars and conference calls provide a consistent line of communication with these programs as they implement change to improve their performance. As programs improve their performance, they are removed from ITAP status and others are then identified.

NYSED issues a Program Evaluation Report for each funded program accessible in the management information system on a daily basis as data is updated each evening. The annual Program Evaluation Report will identify whether the agency met the NYS benchmarks for MSG, Post Test Rate, Follow up Outcomes, and HSE achievement. Program staff are able to monitor their progress and attend to any deficiencies or alternate trends. These are aggregate benchmarks set annually by NYSED based upon NRS targets negotiated with the U.S. Education Department and previous year performance data from programs funded by ACCES-AEPP. Programs that do not meet these NYS annual benchmarks will be required to undertake a formal Corrective Action Planning process. The program must submit and receive NYSED approval for a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that identifies specific steps for meeting NYS annual benchmarks by June 30 of the current year.

Both the CAP and Continuous Evaluation Process processes will be reported and tracked through the accountability website at http://www.adult-education-accountability.org for each program funded through this RFP.

Under the federal NRS for adult literacy programs, NYS, and ultimately local service providers, will be evaluated based on performance indicators. Successful applicants must submit data based on the federal requirements of the NRS. Information on the NRS may be found on the web page www.nrsweb.org.

Tracking data in ASISTS follows a four-category process. These categories are sequential and allow for the diversity among NYS's adult literacy programming. The categories are as follows:

Category I – Setup.

Programs enter the following categories of data to set up their data account in ASISTS:

- Funding sources - Programs can track services funded by multiple sources.
- Sites - Providers enter data pertaining to each of their sites and connect it to services so they can run reports separately by site.
- Outcomes - In addition to tracking required outcomes, programs may also track outcomes that are specific to their own specialized programming, such as training or career pathways.
- Personnel - Providers add teacher information including name, experience, certification information, and longevity.
- Classes/Services - Providers create their roster of classes adding the schedule, teacher, and type/level of classes.

Category II – Registration.

All State funded programs must use a standard registration form, the Individual Student Record Form (ISRF).

- Student information - This includes name; Date of Birth (DOB); contact information; and demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, employment status, educational background, and public assistance status. ASISTS also allows providers to note whether a person is a parent or disabled. Social Security Numbers (SSNs) are also recorded when made available by the student.
- Initial Assessment - All providers use standardized assessments. Adult education programs may choose from the list of approvable assessments. For Adult Basic Education, the most updated assessments for math and reading are provided to students including TABE, TABE CLAS-E, BEST, BEST Plus and CASAS. Assessments are conducted as part of the intake process and are part of the 12 hours of contact with the student. These assessments are used to place students in literacy classes and diagnose learning needs.
- Enrollment - Once registration is complete, registrants are assigned to classes based on their assessments and availability.

Category III – Services.

- Contact Hours - Adult Education providers use ASISTS to track attendance hours on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.
- Test scores - Post-tests are given by providers at regular intervals based on NYS Assessment Policy submitted to OCTAE to demonstrate learning gains. ASISTS calculates the MSG based on their standardized assessment scores.

Category IV – Outcomes.

Adult Education providers track student outcomes regularly, both during and after their participation in a program.

- MSG - NRS guidelines define a student as demonstrating MSG when their test score places him or her in an NRS level (one of six predefined educational functioning levels) that is higher than the one determined by that student's initial or pre-test.
- Primary follow-up outcomes - Providers focus on the following key NRS outcomes:
    - Employment;
    - Median wage earning;
    - Attaining the NYS HSE diploma;
    - Attaining an industry-recognized credential; and
    - Entering postsecondary education or training.
- Other Outcomes - ASISTS also facilitates the tracking of a wide variety of outcomes that are customized per program.

Review – Reports and Downloads.

ASISTS includes the following reports to review the data and use it for reporting and management purposes.

- Funding reports - Reports that present data critical to reporting following State funding guidelines. The most critical report is the Program Evaluation report indicating on one page the most critical performance statistics NYSED uses to evaluate programs. The State-funded Employment Preparation Education (EPE) State aid claim forms are also generated from ASISTS.
- Data management reports primarily meant for tracking and internal program management purposes.
- Data checks that are specifically designed to help providers detect and correct issues relating to data quality and completeness.

All of these resources will serve as the basis of core program alignment to support WIOA success.

ACCES-AEPP will continue to refine measurable skill gain targets annually, including definitions of measures and approved assessments for individuals with barriers to employment "who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers."

Seven Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers and the National Reporting System (NRS) accountability office, funded with WIOA leadership funds provide professional development and training for agencies that are WIOA-funded. OCTAE has set the reporting deadline annually for NRS data to August 15. ACCES- AEPP has taken steps to comply with required deadlines. All training and performance reporting policies will be closely coordinated with partner programs to ensure a smooth transition.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

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

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions posted at https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT ASSURANCES
These assurances are required by the General Education Provisions Act for certain programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education.
As the authorized representative of the applicant, by signing the Application Cover Page, I certify that:
1.
the local educational agency will administer each program covered by the application in accordance with all applicable statutes, regulations, program plans, and applications;
2.
the control of funds provided to the local educational agency under each program, and title to property acquired with those funds, will be in a public agency and that a public agency will administer those funds and property;
3.
the local educational agency will use fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that will ensure proper disbursement of, and accounting for, Federal funds paid to that agency under each program;
4.
the local educational agency will make reports to the State agency or board and to the Secretary as may reasonably be necessary to enable the State agency or board and the Secretary to perform their duties and that the local educational agency will maintain such records, including the records required under Section 1232f of this Title, and provide access to those records, as the State agency or board or the Secretary deem necessary to perform their duties;
5.

the local educational agency will provide reasonable opportunities for the participation by teachers, parents, and other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals in the planning for and operation of each program;
6.
any application, evaluation, periodic program plan or report relating to each program will be made readily available to parents and other members of the general public;
7.
in the case of any project involving construction -
a.
the project is not inconsistent with overall State plans for the construction of school facilities, and
b.
in developing plans for construction, due consideration will be given to excellence of architecture and design and to compliance with standards prescribed by the Secretary under Section 794 of Title 29 in order to ensure that facilities constructed with the use of Federal funds are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities;
8.
the local educational agency has adopted effective procedures for acquiring and disseminating to teachers and administrators participating in each program significant information from educational research, demonstrations, and similar projects, and for adopting, where appropriate, promising educational practices developed through such projects; and
9.
none of the funds expended under any applicable program will be used to acquire equipment (including computer software) in any instance in which such acquisition results in a direct financial benefit to any organization representing the interests of the purchasing entity or its employees or any affiliate of such an organization.

All funded programs had to complete Attachment 6 in the RFP: GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA) SEC. 427 ATTESTATION WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT, TITLE II - ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY

Funded programs were required to detail the steps that will be taken to ensure equitable access to and equitable participation in the project or activity to be conducted with federal adult education assistance by addressing the access needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries in order to overcome barriers to equitable participation, including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected

level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, "baseline" indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as "baseline" based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as "baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA." The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as "baseline" for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as

baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as "baseline" for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	36.0%		36.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%		32.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$5,970		$5,970	
Credential Attainment Rate	51.0%		51.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	53.50%		53.50%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed.*

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

(a) State Rehabilitation Council. All VR Agencies, except for those that have an Independent Consumer-Controlled Commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. the designated state agency or designated state unit, as applicable, has (select A or B):

☐ (A) is an independent State commission.

☒ (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/ Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	Jan 2024
Parent Training and Information Center	1	Jan 2024
Client Assistance Program	2	Jan 2021
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	2	Jan 2023
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	Jan 2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	Jan 2025
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	Jan 2026
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	Jan 2026
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	Jan 2024
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	Jan 2025
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	Jan 2025
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	1	Jan 2024
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	2	Jan 2026
State Workforce Development Board	1	Jan 2026
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	2	Dec 2021

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

New York State Education Department/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (NYSED/ACCES-VR) State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is currently comprised of 25 members representing a variety of stakeholders. However, term expirations and other departures have resulted in less than 51% of the members having a disability which is not compliant with section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. NYSED/ACCES-VR will support the SRC in meeting the federal requirement as they recruit new SRC representatives.

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

The SRC advises NYSED/ACCES-VR on issues related to WIOA priorities and the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. The SRC represents a diverse cross-section of NYSED/ACCES-VR customers, agencies and organizational stakeholders committed to improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The responsibilities of the SRC include, but are not limited to, the review and feedback on substantive policy changes, review of customer satisfaction surveys, and supporting the alignment of SRC and NYSED/ACCES-VR priorities with WIOA priorities.

During its committee and general meetings, the SRC offered the following input:

NYSED/ACCES-VR Public Meeting Planning for The State Plan

The SRC, in collaboration with NYSED/ACCES-VR, has developed a plan for a series of virtual public meetings. These meetings consisted of four sessions scheduled over a two-month period, with varying days and times to accommodate diverse schedules, including morning, afternoon, and evening options. The target audience for these sessions included NYSED/ACCES-VR customers and their families, businesses, contracted vendors, and professionals from educational institutions, such as those within the higher education system.

SRC members played a crucial role in maximizing outreach by distributing invitations through their networks. By leveraging their connections, SRC members effectively promoted these meetings and ensured broad participation.

State Plan Public Forums and State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations

NYSED/ACCES-VR submitted the draft of its section of the Combined State Plan to the SRC in December 2025 for review and feedback. NYSED/ACCES-VR held three virtual public hearings in November 2025 to solicit feedback from customers, families, vendors, and the public. Upon completion of its review, SRC recommendations and NYSED/ACCES-VR's responses have been incorporated into the NYSED/ACCES-VR section of the Combined State Plan. Additionally, public comments have been reviewed and considered for incorporation, when appropriate.

NYSED/ACCES-VR Priorities and Amendments to the State Plan

- Enhance outreach to unserved and underserved communities, including but not limited to, individuals learning English, individuals without housing, individuals who are unemployed or living in poverty and individuals living in rural communities.
- Increase the number of individuals obtaining recognized post-secondary credentials by raising awareness among individuals with disabilities about non-degree programs that lead to skill acquisition and career development.
- Support the business community by identifying open sectors within the labor market and collaborating with businesses to prepare individuals with disabilities to fulfill these labor demands. Additionally, provide training to businesses on the advantages of employing individuals with disabilities.
- Strengthen collaboration with colleges, schools, and families to reach more students and youth with disabilities. Also enhance partnerships with mental health agencies to serve as resources for individuals with mental health disabilities.

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

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response.

SRC Comment 1: ACCES-VR should partner with community-based organizations; including more ethnic media outlets (linguistically appropriate), recreation centers, etc.

ACCES-VR Response 1: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will continue to expand orientation and information sessions in local communities.

SRC Comment 2: ACCES-VR should work with school districts and vendors to provide information sessions on services (these sessions should be language and culturally appropriate).

ACCES-VR Response 2: ACCES-VR will continue to work with schools. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) are currently assigned to school districts. ACCES-VR will also continue its partnership with the Office of Special Education (OSE) and will support the sharing of information in multiple languages.

SRC Comment 3: Language barrier is one of biggest challenges for service seekers in NYS. ACCES-VR should provide information in individuals' preferred language and support vendors in doing the same.

ACCES-VR Response 3: ACCES-VR has access to publications and documents in several languages. Language translation and interpreter services will continue to be available in each district office.

SRC Comment 4: ACCES-VR should increase collaboration with Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and other agencies to increase knowledge and awareness of the foster system. Foster care case workers are often the only consistent source of support in a foster youth's life and seem to lack awareness of ACCES-VR.

ACCES-VR Response 4: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will seek to expand collaborative efforts with entities supporting customers engaged in the foster care system.

SRC Comment 5: ACCES-VR should have more informational sessions at the schools and in community that support families and consider a front door approach similar to NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

ACCES-VR Response 5: ACCES-VR has a VRC assigned to each school district in NYS. Each district office also has a Transition and Youth Senior VRC acting as a liaison for the school district in order to best support referrals of students with disabilities to ACCES-VR as soon as age 14. ACCES-VR's website provides resources and information on how to apply and engage in ACCES-VR services.

SRC Comment 6: ACCES-VR should consider virtual or mobile units that can be deployed to rural areas where transportation is a barrier.

ACCES-VR Response 6: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will continue to be innovative in ensuring access to ACCES-VR counselors and services in those areas impacted by transportation barriers. In addition, customers do have the option of meeting with ACCES-VR staff virtually if transportation is not available.

SRC Comment 7: ACCES-VR should work to increase the partnership with Community Colleges and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

ACCES-VR Response 7: ACCES-VR has a strong relationship with several community colleges and has a representative on each LWDB in NYS. It is ACCES-VR's intention to continue to work with these important partners.

SRC Comment 8: ACCES-VR should have information on Supported Employment readily available as well as information on all available VR services, in addition to labor market information on trending trades, early on in the case process.

ACCES-VR Response 8: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and provides customers with information on all services available to them in relation to their specific employment factors and functional limitations throughout their case with ACCES-VR. ACCES-VR uses job exploration and career assessment tools, such as O*NET and WOWI to support customers in developing employment goals that align with current labor market trends.

SRC Comment 9: ACCES-VR should provide testimony from current and prior customers, through a public facing newsletter highlighting the credentials received through the VR process.

ACCES-VR Response 9: ACCES-VR's Business Relations team posts success stories of ACCES-VR customers on the public website and will work to ensure inclusion of the credentials and skills gained through their VR program are incorporated in future stories.

SRC Comment 10: ACCES-VR should ensure that material and resources are up to date and consider reviewing them annually.

ACCES-VR Response 10: ACCES-VR appreciates and agrees with this recommendation.

SRC Comment 11: ACCES- VR should present their program to local chambers of commerce.

ACCES-VR Response 11: Several members of ACCES-VR 's Business Relations team are members of chambers of commerce within their local territories and attend meeting frequently to make business contacts and support businesses in their hiring needs. ACCES-VR will continue to encourage chamber of commerce collaboration statewide.

SRC Comment 12: ACCES-VR should collaborate with the NYS Chief Disability Office (CDO) to reduce redundancy in collaborative efforts.

ACCES-VR Response 12: ACCES-VR collaborates with the CDO frequently and has supported the CDO's development of the NYS Olmstead Plan, is an active agency participant on the NYS Most Integrated System Coordinating Council (MISCC) and participates in many other CDO initiatives.

SRC Comment 13: ACCES-VR should continue to train and educate vendors and front-line staff on engagement and partnership with businesses and provide information on services and incentives and how ACCES-VR can meet business needs.

ACCES-VR Response 13: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will continue utilize the Business Relations team to build partnerships with businesses and support businesses in hiring ACCES-VR customers.

SRC Comment 14: ACCES-VR's Pre-ETS have helped to establish relationships with businesses; through positive experiences, which have been translated to those businesses working with adult VR cases.

ACCES-VR Response 14: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and is encouraged to hear that relationships built through Pre-ETS are being leveraged to benefit all ACCES-VR customers.

SRC Comment 15: ACCES-VR, along with other state agencies, should work to leverage state job opportunities and partnering with businesses.

ACCES-VR Response 15: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will continue to participate in the WIOA Interagency workgroup on business engagement and participate in statewide initiatives for NYS to be a model employer and to increase hiring and employment rates of individuals with disabilities.

SRC Comment 16: Transportation is a huge barrier.

ACCES-VR Response 16: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and provides transportation services for customers when they face this barrier in order for them to participate in training and career services as part of their Individualized Plan for Employment.

SRC Comment 17: ACCES-VR should consider referring all customers for benefits advisement early on in the VR process for customers of all ages.

ACCES-VR Response 17: ACCES-VR currently encourages VRCs to refer customers early and frequently throughout their VR program.

SRC Comment 18: ACCES-VR should implement a process to determine and identify individual barriers.

ACCES-VR Response 18: ACCES-VR utilizes the eligibility determination process to support customers in identifying and understanding their individual barriers to employment, the functional limitations that result, the services to be provided to support the customer in overcoming these barriers and the impact this has in their long-term engagement in competitive integrated employment

SRC Comment 19: ACCES-VR should consider implementing performance-based incentives for vendors beyond 12 months of employment.

ACCES-VR Response 19: ACCES-VR appreciates this comment and will consider additional outcome incentives for vendors in the future.

SRC Comment 20: There should be work done to support customers in better understanding the Social Security Insurance (SSI) nine-month trial work period. Understanding this is important and lack of understanding prevents people from moving forward with employment.

ACCES-VR Response 20: ACCES-VR refers customers for benefits advisement at any point it is determined to be valuable. ACCES-VR will encourage vendors providing the service of benefits advisement to ensure this topic is reviewed with customers when appropriate.

SRC Comment 21: Parents must be involved in the VR process, as they can sometimes be a barrier to their child's retention and growth in employment. By educating and empowering parents, we can significantly enhance the potential for their children's success and development. The more informed the parents are, the greater the opportunities for growth and retention become.

ACCES-VR Response 21: ACCES-VR agrees that parents are an important partner in the career success of their children. ACCES-VR will continue to collaboration with the Office of Special Education and their Family and Community Engagement Centers (FACE) to share more information with families.

(B) COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA). SECTION 101(A)(15), (17), AND (23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE VR AGENCIES TO PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF:

1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

NYSED/ACCES-VR conducted a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) in conjunction with Cornell's Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability. The CSNA report utilized information from reviews of existing literature to identify leading practices and policies that aid in VR efforts toward implementing WIOA requirements. A qualitative data analysis incorporated data from NYSED/ACCES-VR's RSA-911 reports for program years 2018, 2019 and 2020, the American Community Survey and incorporated data into a Group Concept Mapping approach to organize and focus the data sets. Additionally, the CSNA utilized a focus group of SRC members that was conducted in March 2023.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Report

In 2018, people with disabilities (ages 16-64) exiting NYSED/ACCES-VR had higher employment rates (43%) than the general population with disabilities in NYS (34%). However, in 2019, this trend reversed as NYSED/ACCES-VR employment rates fell to 29%, while the general population's rate rose slightly to 35%. A similar pattern continued in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NYSED/ACCES-VR customers with significant disabilities in NYS had lower employment rates compared to the general population and national averages. To improve this, NYSED/ACCES-VR should help individuals set attainable goals, ensure they understand services and their roles, use a person-centered approach, assess needs and strengths, build work skills, support education and training, focus on direct interaction, provide ongoing tailored assistance, help develop career plans, and ensure proper referral to specialized agencies.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

NYSED/ACCES-VR should enhance support for unserved and underserved populations through improved Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) services and outreach. Challenges have included limited relationships with school leaders, insufficient community engagement, transportation issues and lack of benefits advisement.

NYSED/ACCES-VR should address concerns by providing more training, coaching, and supportive practices for staff. Establishing a local community presence could reduce transportation barriers and potentially increase referrals. Public advertisements and targeted outreach could boost participation in VR services.

Participants suggested the need to increase collaboration with independent living centers, community groups, and advocacy organizations to better serve populations like youth in foster care or juvenile justice systems, students with complex disabilities and adults with chronic health conditions.

Participants also suggested that NYSED/ACCES-VR engage with community centers and referral sources, seek successful strategies from partner organizations, share effective referral methods among counselors, and connect more with schools to encourage broader referrals beyond students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

NYSED/ACCES-VR should focus on career-specific training programs with internships and engage with businesses to understand labor market needs. Barriers include lack of awareness of system operations, inconsistencies at the initial contact point, siloed systems, service duplication, poor inter-system collaboration, staffing challenges, and inadequate vendor staff retention, all affecting service quality and customer experience.

NYS can improve service coordination by adopting strategies like service alignment, common intake, collaborative business engagement, and integrated resource teams. Co-locating partners in one location and having a strong initial contact point can enhance consumer experience. NYSED/ACCES-VR should utilize Disability Resource Coordinators to foster partnerships and allow vendors to train staff cost-effectively to address staffing concerns. A "warm handoff" and ongoing communication between professionals are essential for effective collaboration and buy-in from all organizational levels will support these efforts.

D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

Youth and young adults with disabilities in NYS have higher VR participation rates compared to other states and the national average, with NYS having a 38% participation rate between 2018 and 2020 versus the national average of 22%. However, in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, NYS students (20.8%) and OSY (31%) were less likely to be employed at closure compared to national rates (33.5% and 42.7%).

NYSED/ACCES-VR should improve collaboration with schools and vendors to provide comprehensive transition services for students with disabilities. Strengthening connections between VR counselors and schools, expanding community work-based learning opportunities, and increasing outreach about NYSED/ACCES-VR services are crucial. Tools to identify eligible students for Pre-ETS and VR services should be provided, with flexibility in employment goal selection. Barriers include inconsistent referral rates, a lack of understanding of VR services among school staff and disconnects at both K-12 and post-secondary levels. Additional challenges involve varying priorities, unclear responsibilities, inconsistent transition goals, low participation in VR services, difficulties in reaching students before they leave school, and limited transportation options.

NYSED/ACCES-VR aims to help students with disabilities achieve employment goals by improving the perception of their employment potential, involving them more in services, and enhancing coordination among VR, vendors, and schools. The organization plans to strengthen ties with higher education institutions, engage in advocacy to balance educational and transition goals, raise awareness of their offerings, and ensure families and students understand their roles in the process. They also aim to collaborate on creating individualized plans, share information across partners, and streamline transition documentation to ensure consistency. By envisioning students as successful employees, they plan to challenge low expectations and encourage students to explore career possibilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR and vendors will advocate for students, highlighting their value in employment settings, and initiating transition services early to boost career development. Additional strategies include shifting focus from college to career, improving outreach for Pre-ETS needs, and strengthening relationships with educational boards to increase referrals. Improving Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) relationships and coordinating services can reduce service duplication, share best practices, and enhance collaboration.

Focus group recommendations include identifying and sharing best practices for Pre-ETS across the state using various communication methods. Regular meetings with students are advised to better understand their needs, enhancing support from vendors and VR counselors. Collaboration with school guidance counselors is encouraged to help identify students with disabilities. Keeping cases open longer aims to support OSY in achieving employment goals. Increased community involvement and collaboration with other systems and WIOA programs are suggested to better connect with at-risk youth and share information effectively.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

Career services such as job search and placement assistance, short-term job support, supported employment, benefits counseling, and customized employment services positively impact employment outcomes. Other services like transportation, rehabilitation technology, and technical assistance also boost employment rates across students, OSY, and adults. There's a need to increase engagement in Pre-ETS for students with disabilities, requiring more vendor contracts across NYS. Education, training, and assessment services enhance employment chances, with assessment services increasing employment likelihood by 9%. Collaborative support with NYSED/ACCES-VR is essential for meeting the occupational and vocational training needs of adults.

To improve Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), NYSED/ACCES-VR should ensure clear communication with vendors about referrals and paperwork, regularly update and communicate policies and forms, fully compensate vendors for expenses, maintain regular contact with vendors to track customer progress, expand funding for innovative, efficient, and reliable services, transition to a fully electronic paperwork system for easier information processing, provide training on program services and roles, and streamline the documentation submission process.

The collaboration between NYSED/ACCES-VR counselors and vendors depends significantly on their relationships. A strong working alliance is crucial for service coordination, and when it is lacking, participants suggest the need for a protocol to address communication challenges. Vendors face staffing challenges due to contractual requirements, high turnover, and difficulties in hiring qualified, diverse candidates. There are too few vendors statewide, and some regions lack sufficient demand for new locations. Business practices and scope limitations deter potential vendors. Rural areas, particularly Delaware and Essex Counties, face additional barriers like transportation issues, lack of Wi-Fi, and limited knowledge about NYSED/ACCES-VR, making it challenging to provide services or justify vendor presence.

Barriers and Recommendations from Focus Group

NYSED/ACCES-VR can enhance service provision through training and technical support for CRPs by ensuring regular communication with partners. Strategies include partnering with agencies to provide mobile Wi-Fi, exploring satellite offices for rural areas, and establishing school-based offices for VR counselors to facilitate better access to students. Streamlining the business model to reduce eligibility processing time and coordinating closely with vendors for service delivery is essential. Matching referrals to vendor capacity and having preliminary discussions with vendors are recommended. Business practices such as faster processing of amendments, flexible contracts, aligning rates, individualized budget work, sharing successful models, and supporting vendor recruitment and training will also aid vendor sustainability and service efficacy.

The NYS Consortium for Advancing and Supporting Employment (NYS CASE) project offers extensive training for vendors, but concerns arise over the time and financial strain it places on vendor staff

and service delivery. Participants suggest NYSED/ACCES-VR consider reimbursing training time, like NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) does. There's a call for regular trainings on available resources and creating a professional community through an employment consortium led by NYSED/ACCES-VR. This consortium would facilitate collaboration, networking, and support among vendors, highlighting the value of employing people with disabilities. To enhance service delivery, it is recommended that some services remain virtual to save time and costs, and NYSED/ACCES-VR should hire more counselors and representatives to boost employer outreach, allowing vendors to focus on direct customer support.

(C) GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES. SECTION 101(A)(15) AND (23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE VR AGENCIES TO DESCRIBE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE STATE IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS. THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON (1) THE MOST RECENT CSNA, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES; (2) THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND (3) OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE SRC AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. VR AGENCIES MUST—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

During SRC meetings, NYSED/ACCES-VR and the SRC collaboratively reviewed the findings and recommendations in the current CSNA to develop state plan goals and priorities for PYs 2026 and 2027. The SRC took into account the CSNA results and recommendations, in addition to PY 2023 data representing VR federal performance accountability measures and feedback provided during the November 2025 public forums in the development and implementation of these goals and their associated strategies.

Using those considerations, ACCES-VR's SRC developed recommendations on how to ensure NYSED/ACCES-VR customers are aware of training opportunities that lead to valuable credentials, support businesses by hiring people with disabilities and reducing barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from getting jobs or earning higher wages.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

Innovation and Expansion (I&E) funds are used to support programs such as NYSED/ACCES-VR's peer integration program to address barriers to employment (i.e., homelessness, domestic violence, child-care, and unexpected pregnancy). NYSED/ACCES-VR and the Independent Living Councils (ILCs) continue to coordinate peer mentoring services. The intent of these services is to co-locate and integrate trained and qualified peer independent living specialists as members of the VR service delivery team in nine NYSED/ACCES-VR district offices. The Peer Specialists support adults and students with disabilities to sustain their independent living and VR efforts as identified on their

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and to encourage service participation in order to develop and achieve competitive integrated goals and outcomes.

Innovation and expansion funds support a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Program, which provides assistive technology and training. In an effort to expand the customers served by NYSED/ACCES-VR, TRAID Centers maintain and manage a statewide inventory of assistive technology devices which are available to NYSED/ACCES-VR customers as loans. TRAID Centers also deliver demonstrations, training and technical assistance to VR customers and VR staff on assistive technology options.

I&E funds support the projects and work of the SRC, such as reimbursing members' travel to quarterly meetings.

NYSED/ACCES-VR supports the annual New York Association for Independent Living's (NYAIL's) conference with the use of I&E funds. NYSED/ACCES-VR staff attend this valuable conference where individuals with disabilities are educated and trained on self-advocacy and independent living skills. NYSED/ACCES-VR covers the provision of interpreters for conference attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing.

NYSED/ACCES-VR will continue to support the development of a community resource map that will identify and include varied resources in the community applicable to individuals with disabilities. The tool was developed through a Post-Secondary Transition and Data Technical Assistance Partnership MOU in conjunction with Cornell and connects families and professionals with local agencies to support early childhood through post-school life. The funding in this MOU allows the online site to remain modern and be updated as necessary as well as provide translation of this document into alternate languages for families.

Additionally, NYESD/ACCES-VR has contracted with the Lexington Communication Skills Project Program. This program serves Deaf individuals who are not formally educated and need to acquire English and American Sign Language (ASL) skills. This program contract is supported through I&E funds and provides a foundation for these individuals in their daily functioning; the overarching goal is to wholistically prepare the individual for the world of work and independence.

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

Priority 1: Improve the quality of NYSED/ACCES-VR services.

Goals for Priority 1: Increase the number of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in NYSED/ACCES-VR's customer satisfaction surveys to 90%; and through use of established contract performance measures for vendors, increase the rate of vendors who meet or exceed the established benchmark for quality contract deliverables to 80%.

Strategies for Priority 1:

1.1: Continue to seek input from customers through satisfaction surveys and evaluate results for opportunities for improvement in the quality of services provided.

1.2: Continue to conduct case record reviews both internally and externally to monitor service provision. The review results are assessed by Central Office Administration and district offices. Training and technical assistance is then designed and provided to address any identified deficits.

1.3: NYSED/ACCES-VR district office staff will continue to review and rate reports by vendors on their established contract deliverables.

1.4: Maintain the provision of training for supervisors. Trainings focus on the multiple roles of a supervisor and provide updates on policy, data collection, requirements for timeliness of eligibility and IPE development, annual plan reviews and to ensure consistent communication with all staff.

1.5: Continue providing NYS CASE professional development training to supported employment, services to youth, Pre-ETS and direct placement vendors, at no cost to the vendors, to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the supported employment program.

1.6: Maintain the identification of additional mechanisms that allow for continuous feedback from customers, business, and vendors.

C. 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); AND

Priority 2: Increase services to target populations: students with disabilities, and unserved and underserved groups.

Goals for Priority 2: The service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations, including students and youths with disabilities, will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations; and Pre-ETS will be made available to students with disabilities to establish a solid foundation upon which to build their career path.

Strategies for Priority 2:

2.1: Continue statewide distribution of NYSED/ACCES-VR brochures aimed at students, youth, families, parent involved school organizations (e.g., parent-teacher associations and special education parent-teacher associations) and professional staff that work with students and youth.

2.2: Continue to increase awareness in the postsecondary community of VR services. Collaborate with colleges that support students with disabilities, meet with parent/student groups during the colleges' summer orientations, and attend college career events.

2.3: Staff training related to providing services to special populations such as mental health, youth and parents of youth with disabilities.

2.4: Continue to provide and encourage the display and/or electronic sharing of NYSED/ACCES-VR recruitment posters, transition services brochure and information specific to student and youth in schools (both traditional and non-traditional) and in other settings that work with students and youth with disabilities.

2.5: Continue to work directly with schools, community agencies, colleges, and other partners to ensure that Pre-ETS for students with disabilities are available to students who are eligible and potentially eligible for NYSED/ACCES-VR services as needed and appropriate.

2.6: Engage the ILCs to support a coordinated effort between VR services and ILC services, such as peer mentoring and trial work experience to support students and youth in sustaining their independent living and VR efforts as identified on their IPE.

2.7: Increase training opportunities specific to working with students and youth for NYSED/ACCES-VR staff.

2.8: Continue to maintain and update as necessary a local school and NYSED/ACCES-VR liaison contact information Excel document and continue to distribute to school liaisons and VR staff.

2.9: Continue to participate in Office of Special Education presentations statewide through regional Family and Community Engagement (FACE) collaboration.

2.10: Continue to participate in presentations facilitated by Regional Interagency Technical Assistance Teams which is comprised of regional state agency representatives, family, and youth partners and advocacy organizations.

2.11: Review and implement flexibilities across VR processes and service provision to expand services and allowances reaching more VR participants and increasing employment outcomes and advancement in employment.

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

Priority 3: Increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Goals for Priority 3: Increase partnerships with postsecondary education institutions, vocational institutions, and apprenticeships; assess and track the percentage of individuals who obtain skills gain; and increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Strategies for Priority 3:

3.1: Collaborate with Office of Special Education Technical Assistance Partnerships (TAPs), the Regional Partnership Centers, and the Early Childhood and School-Aged FACE centers designed to provide support to schools, students, and families.

3.2: Partner with all vendors to increase the collection of postsecondary credentials upon a customer's completion of an educational program.

3.3: Develop a plan of action to implement recommendations resulting from the NYS Board of Regents Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities.

3.4: Enhance the partnership with the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) to increase apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities, including collaborative work through NYSDOL's (New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network SCION) initiative.

3.5: Increase provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education through partnerships with community colleges.

Priority 4: Effectively serve businesses.

Goals for Priority 4: Increase business penetration rate and increase business customers with repeat service.

Strategies for Priority 4*:*

4.1: Continue to utilize NYSDOL's OSOS case management system for tracking NYSED/ACCES-VR's business engagement activities that relate to penetration rate and services provided to business.

4.2: Continue to provide training to businesses on topics as requested, including accommodations and financial incentives.

4.3: Actively participate on the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in each local region.

4.4: Continue collaboration with OPWDD on training to businesses on how to employ people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Priority 5: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by NYSED/ACCES-VR.

Goals for Priority 5: Evaluate employment rates for NYSED/ACCES-VR customers at 2nd and 4th quarter after exit and median earnings after exit.

Strategies for Priority 5:

5.1: Collaborate with WIOA core partners and other state agencies that serve individuals with disabilities and utilize the jointly developed referral and release of information process. This agreed upon process streamlines access to services across the programs and better integrates VR services with the employment preparation resources of each of the WIOA core partners. Update and re-release the referral form and ensure utilization of the form by all partners at the local level.

5.2: Strengthen and enhance activities that promote On-the-Job Training and Work Try-Out utilization.

5.3: Continue to strengthen local partnerships with school districts and postsecondary institutions.

5.4: Continue to provide experiential learning and work experiences (i.e., remote, virtual and/or in-person) through summer, part-time and temporary work experience.

5.5: Collaborate with the Office of Children and Family Services/NYS Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB), OPWDD, Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the NYSED Office for Special Education on implementing better methods for youth with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment, including the transition of students from secondary to post-secondary education to employment.

5.6: Collaborate with NYSDOL and the Career Center Disability Resources Navigators, identify and leverage disability-related resources and partners, including NYSED/ACCES-VR and OCFS/NYSCB, to support collaboration around a job seeker's employment and/or training goal(s).

5.7: Provide referral and access for benefits advisement/counseling at key points throughout the VR process.

5.8: Provide training to job placement vendors on employment trends and business needs, including what constitutes a good resume for a particular field.

(D) EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS. FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, PROVIDE AN EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS FOR THE GOALS OR PRIORITIES, INCLUDING PROGRESS ON THE STRATEGIES UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, APPLICABLE TO THAT PROGRAM YEAR. SECTIONS 101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE VR AGENCIES TO DESCRIBE—

1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

Priority 1: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by NYSED/ACCES-VR.

Goal 1.1: Monitor employment rates at 2nd quarter after exit to obtain baseline data for establishing an appropriate performance measure.

- The rate of employment at the second quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services in PY 2024 was 47%. This was down only 1.9% from the previous PY and aligns with federal trends in employment rates.

Goal 1.2: Monitor employment rates at 4th quarter after exit to obtain baseline data for establishing an appropriate performance measure.

- The rate of employment at the 4th quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services in PY 2024 was 47.9% which remains unchanged from PY 2023.

Goal 1.3: Monitor median earnings at 4th quarter after exit to obtain baseline data for establishing an appropriate performance measure.

- The median earnings at the 4th quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services for PY 2024 were $5,832. This is more than a $200 increase from PY 2023.

Priority 2: Increase services to target populations: students with disabilities; and unserved and underserved groups.

Goal 2.1: The service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations. The minimum target rate for service provision for NYSED/ACCES-VR customers who are from unserved and underserved populations is a .80 ratio.

- NYSED/ACCES-VR achieved this goal by exceeding the .80 ratio in with a ratio of .86 in PY 2024. Outreach activities conducted by NYSED/ACCES-VR contributed to the achievement of this goal.

Goal 2.2: Students with disabilities will receive pre-employment transition services to establish a solid foundation upon which to build their career path.

- NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to achieve this goal and meet fiscal expenditure requirements on this customer and service category. NYSED/ACCES-VR provides Pre-ETS statewide to students with disabilities. In PY 2024, NYSED/ACCES-VR provided Pre-ETS To 12,544 students with disabilities (up from 8,242 from PY 2023) which is a very significant 52% increase. Of those students with disabilities 2,981 were served as potentially eligible (up from 2,853 in PY 2023).

  NYSED/ACCES-VR established a Pre-ETS Implementation Team, comprised of representatives from NYSED/Office of Special Education and ACCES (NYSED/OSEA), to expand the delivery of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities across NYS. The team meets monthly to coordinate statewide efforts. NYSED/ACCES-VR hosted two (2) Pre-ETS Staff Summits and two (2) Pre-ETS Vendor Summits to build capacity and strengthen training to support consistent, high-quality Pre-ETS service delivery. In addition, NYSED/OSEA issued a Joint Policy Directive advising secondary schools to include Pre-ETS on students' IEPs. NYSED/ACCES-VR and NYSED/OSEA also jointly hosted statewide webinars for transition staff to support effective implementation.

NYSED/ACCES-VR is working to expand collaborative partnerships with community colleges to expand the provision of Pre-ETS and potentially eligible services as well as offering Pre-ETS and potentially eligible contracted services to individuals in Tribal VR. Priority 3: Improve the quality of NYSED/ACCES-VR services.

Goal 3.1: Increase the number of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in VR's customer satisfaction surveys. NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to strive for improvement in the area of customer satisfaction.

- In the most recent Consumer Satisfaction Survey, the majority of adult and youth customer respondents expressed an overall satisfaction with the quality of services received and overall positive experiences in working with NYSED/ACCES-VR.
- Strategies that contributed to improvement included training for both NYSED/ACCES-VR staff and vendors that support the continuous quality improvement of services provided to customers.

Goal 3.2: Through use of established contract performance measures for service providers, 80% of providers will meet or exceed the standard.

- NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to meet and exceed this goal for PYs 2023 and 2024. For PY 2023, 98.2% of the contract performance reviews were satisfactory.
- NYSED/ACCES-VR will continue to conduct quality reviews with vendors that support success in line with the 2024 Core Rehabilitative Services contract implementation.

Priority 4: Increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Goal 4.1: Increase partnerships with post-secondary education institutions.

- NYSED/ACCES-VR achieved its goal of increasing partnerships with postsecondary education institutions through a concerted effort by its Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) unit. Examples of strategies used by the TAYS include working closely with specialized college programs, collaborations with college student disability services staff, providing NYSED/ACCES-VR orientation presentations regarding Pre-Employment Transition and VR services to families and incoming freshman at institutions of higher education, and establishing relationships with colleges, in their district office catchment area. In addition, NYSED/ACCES-VR has developed partnerships with community colleges to provide Pre-ETS to secondary and post-secondary students.

Goal 4.2: Assess and track the percentage of individuals who obtain measurable skills gain.

- In PY 2024, NYSED/ACCES-VR achieved a 61.1% rate for Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) attainment (up from 60.0% in PY 2023). NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to utilize strategies to improve the percentage of people with MSG including evaluating quarterly data and identifying potential errors or missing data, rectifying errors that were noted, and taking steps to reduce future errors.

Goal 4.3: Increase the percentage of individuals who achieved credential attainment.

- In PY 2024, NYSED/ACCES-VR had 42% of individuals attain a credential. This is down by only 1% from PY 2023 and is a result of customers enrolling in more advanced programs that require several academic years to obtain the credential.

Priority 5: Effectively serve businesses.

The following pertains to both goals in this priority which NYSED/ACCES-VR improved upon. NYSED/ACCES-VR tracks local work with businesses utilizing the NYSDOL OSOS case management system. The partnership with NYSDOL to track business engagement was essential as NYSED/ACCES-VR does not have a business case management system that tracks business engagement measures.

Goal 5.1: Obtain baseline statewide WIOA measure for Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

- As of October 1, 2025, effectiveness in serving employers is measured through retention with the same employer in the 2nd and 4th quarters following a customer's exit from a WIOA core program. At the end of PY 2025, the baseline for this revised performance measure will be identified.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to make progress on its efforts to evaluate the primary indicators of performance as outlined under Section 116 of WIOA.

Employment Rate-2nd Quarter After Exit: The rate of employment at the 2nd quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services in PY 2024 was 47%. This was down only 1.9% from the previous PY and aligns with federal trends in employment rates.

Employment Rate-4th Quarter After Exit: The rate of employment at the 4th quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services in PY 2024 was 47.9% which remains unchanged from PY 2023.

Median Earnings- 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings at the 4th quarter after exit from NYSED/ACCES-VR services for PY 2024 were $5,832. This is more than a $200 increase from PY 2023.

Credential Attainment: In PY 2024, NYSED/ACCES-VR had 42% of individuals attain a credential. This is down by 1% from PY 2023 and may be due to a higher number of VR customers enrolling in degree programs that require more time to complete

Measurable Skills Gain: In PY 2024, NYSED/ACCES-VR achieved a 61.1% rate for MSG attainment (up from 60.0% in PY 2023).

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

I&E funds are used to support programs such as NYSED/ACCES-VR's peer integration program to address barriers to employment (i.e., homelessness, domestic violence, child-care, and unexpected pregnancy). NYSED/ACCES-VR and the ILCs continue to coordinate peer mentoring services that support a student or youth to sustain their independent living and VR efforts as identified on their IPE and to encourage service participation to develop and achieve competitive integrated goals and outcomes.

Innovation and expansion funds support an MOU with the TRAID Centers, which provides assistive technology and training. In an effort to expand the customers served by NYSED/ACCES-VR, TRAID Centers maintain and manage a statewide inventory of assistive technology devices which are

available to NYSED/ACCES-VR customers' use. TRAID Centers also deliver demonstrations, trainings and provide technical assistance to VR customers and VR staff on assistive technology options.

I&E funds support projects and work of the SRC such as reimbursing members' travel to quarterly meetings.

NYSED/ACCES-VR is a sponsor of NYAIL conferences, including biannual statewide conferences held in 2023 and 2025. NYSED/ACCES-VR's support of NYAIL's conference facilitates the provision of a statewide disability rights and independent living conference for interested participants from NYS agencies, the network of ILCs, NYSED/ACCES-VR staff and customers, and a wide range of human service organizations. NYSED/ACCES-VR sponsorship covers the cost of interpreters, speakers and any associated speaker fees and allows for reduced registration fees for individuals with disabilities.

NYSED/ACCES-VR will continue to support the development of a community resource map that will identify and include varied resources in the community applicable to individuals with disabilities. The tool was developed through a Post-Secondary Transition and Data Technical Assistance Partnership MOU in conjunction with Cornell and connects families and professionals with local agencies to support early childhood through post-school life. The funding in this MOU allows the online site to remain modern and be updated as necessary as well as provide translation of this document into alternate languages for families.

Additionally, NYESD/ACCES-VR has contracted with the Lexington Communication Skills Project Program. This program serves Deaf individuals who are not formally educated and need to acquire English and American Sign Language (ASL) skills. This program contract is supported through I&E funds and provides a foundation for these individuals in their daily functioning; the overarching goal is to wholistically prepare individuals who are deaf for the world of work and independence.

(E) SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

☒VR agency requests to receive Title VI funds.

☐VR agency does NOT elect to receive Title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under Title I.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

NYSED/ACCES-VR provides services to individuals, including youth, with the most significant disabilities who might not be traditionally considered appropriate for competitive integrated employment.

In PY 2024, 4,201 individuals with the most significant disabilities participated in supported employment services, an increase of 226 participants from PY 2023. Of this total, 1,416 were youth with the most significant disabilities, an increase of 316 individuals from PY 2023.

NYSED/ACCES-VR provided multiple strategies to support people with the most significant disabilities to become competitively employed in an integrated setting. Examples include:

- Providing college opportunities for students with the most significant disabilities to better support their success in supported employment and in the workforce. NYSED/ACCES-VR supports students with the significant disabilities to attend college programs that are uniquely designed to meet both the physical and educational needs of students.
- Availability of the Peer Integration Program through the State Independent Living Centers. Peer Integration programs provide support to individuals, including individuals with most significant disabilities, to reduce barriers to employment such as homelessness, a behavioral health episode, lack of childcare, or unexpected health emergency and improve success in supported employment and the workforce.
- Providing coaching and communication supports to people, including youth, with a disability that impact communication skills, such as autism spectrum disorders, to better understand social cues and unspoken communication so they can be competitively employed, including those with supported employment services, in integrated work environments.

Supported Employment goals:

- Develop quality programs that could be used for replication purposes.
- Establish successful supported employment programs that will provide technical assistance to other programs.

The strategies listed here pertain to the two supported employment goals outlined above. NYSED/ACCES-VR has established required training for supported employment vendors and makes these trainings available for free. NYSED/ACCES-VR, through a contract with NYS CASE, provides training and technical assistance to supported employment vendors who are required to complete core courses in employment services delivery, advanced employment services practice, employment services administration, student and youth transition, and business engagement. This is a strategy that is being used towards further development and replication of quality supported employment programs.

Strategies:

Provide services to individuals, including youth, with the most significant disabilities who might not be traditionally considered appropriate for competitive integrated employment. Factors that impede achieving the goals include businesses' expectations for employees in all positions, including entry-level, to complete many different tasks. As a result, businesses are less willing to customize employment or carve jobs to better meet the abilities of some people with the most significant disabilities, thus impacting the obtainment, maintenance, and rate of employment.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities who participate in NYSED/ACCES-VR Supported Employment (SE) services programs engage in assessment, job planning, counseling, job

development, job placement, intensive job-site training, and extended job retention services. SE services begin after job placement and may be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities for a period of time not to exceed 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the VR counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Scope of Supported Employment (SE) Services

SE services are comprised of on-going services, including customized employment, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in SE that:

- Are provided singly or in combination to assist a customer to achieve competitive integrated employment;
- Are based on a determination of the needs of the customer and as specified in the IPE; and
- Are provided by NYSED/ACCES-VR for up to 24 months, unless an extension is necessary to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.
- SE services provide all the supports necessary to assist the customer with:
    - Learning specific work duties and performance standards;
    - Learning formal and informal site-related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication protocol);
    - Acquiring site-appropriate work-related behaviors when interacting with supervisors and co-workers;
    - Acquiring the sense of belonging to the workforce;
    - Understanding and using the benefits of employment (i.e., spending pay, using leave, participating in employee programs, working under direction from the supervisor, socializing with co-workers); and
    - Developing a community support system that accommodates and positively reinforces the employee's role as a worker.

Strategies are customized to meet the needs of the customer and business and to assist the customer in meeting business expectations. Job coaches use available community resources in meeting customer needs and to assist them in maintaining employment.

Youth with significant disabilities are provided opportunities to receive the services necessary to support their achievement of competitive integrated employment. SE outcomes need to be in competitive integrated employment, or if the employment is in an integrated setting but not at a competitive wage, then the customer is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment.

NYSED/ACCES-VR contracts with vendors for the provision of SE services through Core Rehabilitation Services contracts. SE vendors, in cooperation with the state agencies, have the following responsibilities:

- Actively involve customers and families, when appropriate, in assessment, planning and decision making throughout the service delivery process;
- Consider the customer’s and business' needs with the nature and frequency of vendor's services including job placement;

- Through a customer-centered decision-making process, pursue the goals detailed in the IPE by using SE resources to assist the customer;
- Report on programmatic and fiscal deliverables as outlined in the SE guidelines;
- Deliver SE services in accordance with federal and state standards and the contractual obligations for the service;
- Strive continuously to evaluate the efficacy of the services and make improvements as needed;
- SE vendors' contracts are performance-based and vendors receive payments once milestones and outcomes are attained. NYSED/ACCES-VR conducts case reviews of SE vendors to evaluate quality and identify areas for continuous quality improvement. NYSED/ACCES-VR monitors and evaluates all vendor-provided reports such as monthly progress reports, career development in extended services, customer satisfaction and quality outcomes; and
- NYSED/ACCES-VR is committed to maintaining a knowledgeable SE services workforce. NYSED/ACCES-VR requires professional development and employment services training for all vendor staff providing SE services. These trainings are offered at no cost to the vendor by NYS CASE, which receives its funds for these trainings from NYSED/ACCES-VR.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 363.4(A) AND 34 CFR 361.5(C)(19)(V).

NYS' Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 on integrated employment, including supported employment, is implemented through a collaborative interagency process in NYS with OPWDD and OMH working with NYSED/ACCES-VR to provide comprehensive supported employment services. NYSED/ACCES-VR is responsible for competitive integrated employment, including intensive supported employment services, except for those services provided directly by OPWDD and OMH. All three agencies are responsible for the extended phases of supported employment. NYSED/ACCES-VR has extended services available to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a "youth with a disability", whichever occurs first when they are not eligible for extended supported employment services from either OPWDD or OMH. Additionally, NYSED/ACCES-VR has adult extended services available through NYS funding.

(F) ANNUAL ESTIMATES. SECTIONS 101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE ALL VR AGENCIES TO ANNUALLY CONDUCT A FULL ASSESSMENT OF THEIR RESOURCES AND ABILITY TO SERVE ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS BEFORE THE START OF THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR. IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR § 361.29(B), ANNUAL ESTIMATES MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING PROJECTIONS:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
	67,175	60,327	$7,578,627.73	

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
	52,887	4,508	$1,431,111.11	

(G) ORDER OF SELECTION.

☒ The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection, and all eligible individuals will be served.

☐ The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

*** VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.**

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

1. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER;

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

2. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

☐Yes

☒ No

(H) WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS. THE STATE PLAN SHALL BE IN EFFECT IN ALL POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS OF THE STATE, HOWEVER, THE COMMISSIONER OF THE REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (COMMISSIONER) MAY WAIVE COMPLIANCE WITH THIS REQUIREMENT IN

ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS IN 34 CFR 361.26. IF THE VR AGENCY IS REQUESTING A WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS OR HAS A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS, DESCRIBE THE TYPES OF SERVICES AND THE LOCAL ENTITIES PROVIDING SUCH SERVICES UNDER THE WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS AND HOW THE AGENCY HAS COMPLIED WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN 34 CFR 361.26. IF THE VR AGENCY IS NOT REQUESTING OR DOES NOT HAVE AN APPROVED WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS, PLEASE INDICATE "NOT APPLICABLE."

Not Applicable.

(I) COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(7) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THE VR AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN ANNUALLY A DESCRIPTION (CONSISTENT WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) OF THE VR AGENCY'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH SHALL INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES THE VR AGENCY WILL UNDERTAKE TO ENSURE IT HAS AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED STATE REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS THAT PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

B. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed (11/2025)	No. of Personnel Currently Needed based on metrics/empty titles	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (including VRC Trainee 1 and 2)	274	319	160
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistant	104	119	60
Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	69	76	38
Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	20	22	11

Integrated Employment Specialist (IES) 1	15	21	11
Integrated Employment Specialist (IES) 2	5	7	4
Miscellaneous Support Titles (SSA, Security Officer, Confidential Aide) Hired as needed	10	1	1
Office Assistant 1	47	55	28
Office Assistant 2	37	43	22
Administrative Assistant 1	28	34	17
Business Office Manager (AS1)	15	16	8
Regional Business Manager (AS2)	5	5	3
District Office Manager	14	15	8
Regional Coordinator	4	5	3
Central Office Administrative Staff	33	36	18

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

The average caseload size is 165 customers per qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC).

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

(47,620 individuals x 5 years) = 238,100

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
University at Buffalo - SUNY	Rehabilitation Counseling - MS	64	25

Hofstra University	Rehabilitation Counseling - MS	24	6
Hunter College - CUNY	Rehabilitation Counseling - MS	45	14

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

NYSED/ACCES-VR has an internship program to provide second-year graduate students with an opportunity to perform their internships in one of the NYSED/ACCES-VR district offices. This joint initiative with the colleges allows for NYSED/ACCES-VR to recruit and prepare students to work at NYSED/ACCES-VR while they are completing their studies. The internship program is comprised of two components, a practicum and internship, and these are offered three times a year at NYSED/ACCES-VR in order to maximize recruitment and future retention of qualified staff. When resources allow, paid internships are made available to students.

More than 457 students participated in the internship program since 2006 with 123 VRCs hired. This is a testament to NYSED/ACCES-VR's collaboration with colleges to recruit, prepare and retain qualified staff. A partnership with NYSED/ACCES-VR and a NYS college receiving a Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) long-term training grant has resulted in NYSED/ACCES-VR staff completing their practicum and internship requirements for their master's degree in rehabilitation counseling while working at NYSED/ACCES-VR. This partnership provides an internal mechanism for promotion to a VRC, assists with the retention of staff, and supports NYSED/ACCES-VR in meeting its projected VRC staffing needs.

In an effort to address Counselor recruitment, NYSED/ACCES-VR and NYS Civil Service/Human Resources created a VRC Traineeship. Under the Traineeship, graduate students in Rehabilitation Counseling and related degree programs, within two years of graduating and Certification Rehabilitation Counseling eligibility, have the opportunity to be hired by NYSED and earn on the job training as a Counselor. An individual can sit in a Traineeship for up to two years as they work towards completion of their master's degree and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) eligibility. Upon attainment of the degree and CRC eligibility, the Trainee moves into a VRC Journeyship position as a permanently retained Counselor. Traineeships can be performed alongside a practicum or internship, giving the student an opportunity to earn a full-time salary while satisfying internship requirements and learn the essential functions of a VRC's job. Traineeship marketing efforts have targeted not only Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) approved Rehabilitation Counselor graduate programs (University of Buffalo, Hofstra, Hunter, etc.), but also CACREP approved related degree programs. Since its inception in November 2022, NYSED/ACCES-VR has hired 16 Trainees.

Additionally, NYS has worked to increase VRC recruitment by updating the minimum qualifications for a VRC to recruit and retain staff. NYSED/ACCES-VR in conjunction with NYSED Human Resources and NYS Civil Service implemented an expansion of the qualifications and salaries for the VRC and VRC Trainee positions. The expansion of the qualifications maintained the current minimal qualifications of either holding a master's degree in clinical Rehabilitation Counseling or being eligible to sit for the CRCC exam, and, added a third option of holding a master's degree in a related

field, with related experience. Additionally, to continue NYSED/ACCES-VR's support of continuing education and support the value in holding a CRC, NYSED/ACCES-VR will be providing reimbursement to staff applying for, taking and renewing their CRCC.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

NYSED/ACCES-VR is committed to ensuring that personnel have current knowledge and continuous skill updates, including a current understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of students, youth, and adults with disabilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR has several mechanisms to support the provision of staff training as it is critical to the development and retention of qualified staff and for the provision of quality services. Training may be provided by in-house staff; organizations contracted to train on a specific topic; NYSED/ACCES-VR sponsored staff attendance at conferences; federally funded training resources specific to vocational rehabilitation; and other state-agency sponsored and WIOA core partner trainings. NYSED/ACCES-VR assesses training needs on an ongoing basis with its staff. This includes review of satisfaction with, and effectiveness of, trainings provided in the prior year and identifying emerging training needs. These results, as well as consideration for the interest of staff, skill levels, experiences and needs are used to identify and develop trainings. Training offerings to staff that include assessment, as appropriate, and applicable vocational counseling and job development skill building included ethics, case management and counselor empowerment, skill building in crucial/difficult conversations and decisions, WIOA, long term NYSED/ACCES-VR goals, eligibility determination, significance of disability determination, which were supported by Cornell, as well as IPE development and planning. CASE is currently being updated and revised to align with the CRS Contract that went live in 2024. This is asynchronous training and will include ACRE and APSE standards for vendors customized with NYS specific requirements. Additionally, NYSED/ACCES-VR has established a round-table forum of newly hired VRC's and will be developing a similar structure for onboarding new SRVCs and VRC trainees. Staff and vendors have access to information and training related to assistive technology provided in collaboration with the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. The NYS Justice Center is the agency which administers the TRAID programs and is responsible for carrying out section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. The TRAID programs provide, and will continue to provide, training on assistive technology to NYSED/ACCES-VR's district offices. NYSED/ACCES-VR provides multiple training paths for staff. Additionally, NYSED/ACCES-VR collaborates with other state and federal agencies and disability organizations to jointly develop or provide disability and/or systems trainings for staff. These partnerships provide trainings for VRCs to earn continuing education credits and to meet their certification requirements.

Currently the WIOA Interagency Team has a workgroup charged to develop a Workforce System Training agenda. Along with WIOA partners, NYSED/ACCES-VR is engaged with a Training and Accessibility Assistance Workgroup (TAAG) (see the Workforce Development Activities Section of the

Plan for additional detail), which includes linkage to local Career Centers. NYSED/ACCES-VR began conducting bi-monthly virtual trainings for staff and individuals receiving services through the Career Center. In turn, NYSED/ACCES-VR staff have been able to access the virtual trainings offered through the Career Centers. Key partnerships exist with the following state agencies and organizations that support the sharing of information, training, and knowledge: OASAS, OPWDD, OMH, Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE), New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, Inc., NYATEP, NYS Independent Living Council (NYSILC), and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. As part of a continuous quality improvement process for staff training, NYSED/ACCES-VR is also engaging national partners for evidence-based training specifically for VRCs.

The TAAG is developing, and will maintain, a system inventory of training. Information will be shared and all staff within the system and will be provided with access to ongoing, collaborative training opportunities. NYSED/ACCES-VR disseminates both resources and trainings from TAAG to staff via email.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

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

(B) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

NYS does not have state certification or licensure for VR counselors. NYSED/ACCES-VR uses the national standard established by the CRCC for its VRCs. The participation of VRCs in an educational program to meet the standard is regularly monitored to evaluate compliance with NYSED personnel standards (cited below).

NYSED/ACCES-VR employs VRCs who have, or are eligible to obtain, qualification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). All VRCs are required to have:

- A master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, including a supervised internship, from a CORE accredited program; or
- A master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling and notice of eligibility to participate in the CRCC certificate examination.

VRCs considered for appointment to a Manual Communication or Bi-Lingual position are required to demonstrate proficiency in the manual language or in the bi-lingual language. Proficiency must be at a level that will permit them to perform the duties of the position satisfactorily.

Civil Service Qualifications for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistant

NYSED/ACCES-VR employs VRCAs to assist VRCs in the administrative, paraprofessional, and routine communication tasks that enhance the vocational rehabilitation process. The VRCAs do not determine eligibility, develop the vocational goal, write the IPE, or determine case closures. To be eligible for employment, VRCAs must meet the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in vocational rehabilitation, social work, counseling, or psychology; or
- Bachelor's degree and one year of qualifying experience; or
- 60 semester college credit hours and two years of qualifying experience; or
- Four years of qualifying experience.

For the experience to be considered qualifying, the primary responsibilities of a position must have involved professional or paraprofessional duties in one of the following areas:

- Providing direct services beyond routine personal care or supervision to adults or adolescents with a disability in a rehabilitation program or facility; or
- Providing vocational or educational services to adults or adolescents with a disability in the areas of assessment, counseling, job coaching, guidance, placement, or job development.

NYSED/ACCES-VR is committed to ensuring that personnel have current knowledge and continuous skill updates, including a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of students, youth, and adults with disabilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR has several mechanisms to support the provision of staff training as it is critical to the development and retention of qualified staff and for the provision of quality services. In-house staff may provide training; organizations contracted to train on a specific topic; NYSED/ACCES-VR sponsored staff attendance at conferences; federally funded training resources specific to vocational rehabilitation; and other state-agency sponsored and WIOA core partner trainings.

NYSED/ACCES-VR assesses training needs on an ongoing basis with its staff. This includes review of satisfaction with, and effectiveness of, trainings provided in the prior year and identifying emerging training needs. These results, as well as consideration for the diversity of staff, skill levels, experiences and needs are used to identify and develop trainings.

Some additional examples of training offerings to staff that include assessment, as appropriate, and applicable vocational counseling and job development skill building included ethics, partnering with families, adolescent development and its impact on vocational rehabilitation, generational differences and their impact on vocational rehabilitation, working with older adults, labor market information and use of The Career Index Plus, how to have difficult discussions (crucial conversations), and learning about various disabilities (i.e. autism spectrum disorders, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and chronic pain). Staff and vendors have access to information and training related to assistive technology provided in collaboration with the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. The NYS Justice Center is the agency which administers the TRAID programs and is responsible for carrying out section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. The TRAID programs provide, and will continue to provide, training on assistive technology to NYSED/ACCES-VR's district offices.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

NYSED/ACCES-VR ensures adequate services to applicants, eligible individuals, and customers with limited English proficiency, or who use other modes of communication such as sign language, by employing staff able to communicate in more than one language, including sign language. When such staff is not available, NYSED/ACCES-VR obtains the services from contractors that are certified

or state-approved interpreters to communicate with applicants, eligible individuals, and customers to support the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

Through its administration of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs, NYSED/ACCES-VR coordinates policy and services for students with disabilities with the NYSED/Office of Special Education NYSED/Office of Special Education and ACCES (NYSED/OSEA). In NYS, the age for Students with a Disability has been defined as ages 14-22, up until a student's 23rd birthday, pursuant to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Joint meetings between the NYSED/ACCES-VR Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) unit and the NYSED/OSEA continue to take place to support collaboration, information sharing, and training on Pre-ETS and transition services. The SVRC TAYS share information and provide technical assistance from these meetings with the NYSED/ACCES-VR District Offices. A joint Agreement for the Coordination of Transition Services between NYSED/ACCES-VR and Office of Special Education was signed in April 2020 and remains in place. NYSED/ACCES-VR developed a Transition Letter and shared it with NYSED/ACCES-VR District Office staff through the SVRC TAYS and with school liaisons.

NYSED/OSEA developed FACE which support families, children, and schools in improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. NYSED/OSEA and NYSED/ACCES-VR remain committed to ongoing joint presentations by NYSED/ACCES-VR staff on Pre-ETS, transition and vocational rehabilitation services supporting professional development for all involved staff.

NYSED/OSEA funds the Technical Assistance Partnership (TAP) which provides technical assistance to education professionals, students, and their families to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. TAP and NYSED/ACCES-VR remain committed to statewide and regional presentations about Pre-ETS and transition services to increase understanding and professional development opportunities for staff who support potentially eligible students. The TAYS Unit manager and TAP coordinator work collaboratively and provide resources to staff and stakeholders about Pre-ETS and transitions services to ensure consistent understanding and messaging. Training on the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) continues, as it relates to NYSED/ACCES-VR's overall efforts in serving students and youth. The CDOS is a NYS educational credential that when pursued, requires students to participate in a set of experiences related to preparing for employment. This credential will provide more documentation about the accomplishments of students in the areas of academic instruction, career exploration and development, and provide potential businesses with a student's demonstrated knowledge and experience for entry-level employment.

COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (SECTION 101(A)(11) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT)

(J) COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(11)(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE

RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

The plans, policies and procedures for coordination between designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of VR services, including Pre-ETSs are discussed on a monthly basis during NYSED/ACCES-VR and NYSED/OSEA leadership meeting. Targeted areas are discussed including Pre-ETS and the development of a consistent statewide message to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and VR staff regarding the provision of Pre-ETS to student with disabilities vocational eligible and potentially eligible.

NYSED/ACCES-VR established a Pre-ETS Implementation Team, comprised of representatives from NYSED/ACCES-VR and the Office of Special Education (OSE), to expand the delivery of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities across NYS. The team meets monthly to coordinate statewide efforts. NYSED/ACCES-VR hosted two (2) Pre-ETS Staff Summits and two (2) Pre-ETS Vendor Summits to build capacity and strengthen training to support consistent, high-quality Pre-ETS service delivery. In addition, OSE issued a Joint Policy Directive advising secondary schools to include Pre-ETS on students' IEPs. NYSED/ACCES-VR and OSE also jointly hosted statewide webinars for transition staff to support effective implementation.

Associate Vocational Counselor Transition and Youth Services Unit meets bimonthly with Office of Special Education to collaborate on transition of students with disabilities from secondary to pre-employment transition and vocational services. Presentations to regional Superintendents of secondary education and vocational training programs were completed by the Assistant Commissioner and Associate Vocational Counselor TAYS unit. Local school and VR contact information for all school programs throughout NYS is shared on biannual basis with school liaison and VR liaison.

NYSED/ACCES-VR's Transition and Youth Services Unit participates in Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities biannual meetings. Collaboration and partnership across State agencies, parent groups, ILC, Institutions of Higher Education and P-12, trade organizations, Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision result in outcome of increased aid to Institutions of Higher Education to assist students with disabilities in transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

SVRC TAYS collaborates with LEAs to facilitate regional Pre-Employment Transition Fair with contracted vendors for the provision of Pre-ETS at LEAs.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 CFR 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

(A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

(B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and

implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

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

(D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

(E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

(F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

Recognizing the importance of having a dedicated focus on students and youth, NYSED/ACCES-VR implemented the Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) Team and has Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in Transition and Youth (SRVC TAYS) positions in each of its 15 District Offices. In addition to the SVRC TAYS, there is also a Transition and Youth Services Manager and Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

The SVRC TAYS team assists NYSED/ACCES-VR to meet priorities related to students and youth. Based on these priorities, SVRC TAYS work to:

1. Engage students, youth, parents, high schools, transition specialists, and youth organizations in exploring and planning career choices, including Pre-ETS, that connect to a full range of postsecondary options for training, career development, independent living skills and employment;
2. Improve the number, quality, and rate of employment outcomes for students and youth participating in NYSED/ACCES-VR services;
3. Identify best practices and evidence-based approaches and tools for implementation by NYSED/ACCES-VR staff that will lead to increased vocational and independent living skills outcomes for students and youth;
4. Increase collaborations with multiple stakeholders, including other State agencies, Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA), Client Assistance Program (CAP) and Regional Partnership Centers staff (Regional Partnership Centers replaced the previous Regional Special Education-Technical Assistance Support Centers);
5. Support the implementation of Pre-ETS by providing information and technical assistance to students, families, schools, and community agencies; and
6. Oversee the provision of Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students provided by approved vendors.

The NYSED/ACCES-VR SVRC TAYS team is knowledgeable in evidence-based practices for supporting students and youth with disabilities to achieve successful vocational and independent living outcomes and serves as a resource and support to NYSED/ACCES-VR staff, school districts, and community agencies. Since its inception the SVRC TAYS Team continues to:

- Develop a Statewide transition and student referral system that streamlines the NYSED/ACCES-VR application process and reduces barriers to students' access to postsecondary services;
- Design and implement consistent NYSED/ACCES-VR orientation presentations for high-school students, out-of-school youth, and postsecondary students and youth;
- Identify and provide training to NYSED/ACCES-VR staff on best practices for working with students and youth;
- Provide technical assistance to NYSED/ACCES-VR staff, schools and other community agencies serving students and youth; and
- Collaborate with institutions of higher education to provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities in secondary and post-secondary education.

NYSED/ACCES-VR counselors work closely with school districts to assist a student in moving to post-school life by trying to prevent or minimize gaps between the educational and VR systems. NYSED/ACCES-VR counselors:

- Coordinate and collaborate with school personnel to identify and foster the referral of students with disabilities for Pre-ETS and/or VR services;
- Work collaboratively with school district special education staff about the development of both the IEP and IPE to best support a student's transition;
- Work with local Career Centers and businesses to develop work experiences for students;
- Share information with students, parents (when appropriate), and school staff about the current labor market, community resources, community-based services, adult service programs, independent living centers; and
- Work in collaboration with contracted vendors, State agencies (i.e., OPWDD, OMH), and other community agencies to provide meaningful vocational experiences to students with disabilities to contribute to a positive employment outcome.

NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to utilize virtual or remote platforms to attend IEP meetings with students. Online information sessions were developed and shared with school districts to assist students with disabilities and their families with applying for NYSED/ACCES-VR services. Additionally, NYSED/ACCES-VR updated its website to include an online application process to further support access to VR services for students and individuals with disabilities NYSED/ACCES-VR uses contracts and vocational contracts with vendors to enable students with disabilities to meet in person or virtually during school hours, after school, and on weekends to participate in Pre-ETS.

The NYSED/OSE and NYSED/ACCES-VR work in collaboration with school districts and other State agencies on a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services (i.e., School districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students).

School districts are responsible for the coordination of educational programs and services, including transition planning, which prepare students with disabilities for adult living, learning, and earning.

- School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated by federal and State laws and regulations; and
- NYSED/ACCES-VR is fiscally responsible for providing transition services, Pre-ETS and/or vocational rehabilitation services that are not otherwise mandated through special education requirements, in accordance with NYSED/ACCES-VR policies.

NYSED/ACCES-VR's procedure for outreach, include the following:

Every school district in NYS has an assigned NYSED/ACCES-VR liaison who utilizes outreach procedures that include:

- Regular coordination and collaboration with school personnel to identify and foster the referral of students with disabilities as early as possible in the transition planning process for Pre-ETS and/or vocational rehabilitation services:
- Providing information describing the purpose of NYSED/ACCES-VR, eligibility requirements, application process and the range of services provided through in person meetings, distribution of informational brochures and NYSED/ACCES-VR applications, and presentations specifically designed for students with disabilities, and;
- Utilizing a Statewide transition and student referral system that streamlines the NYSED/ACCES-VR application process and reduces barriers to students' access to postsecondary services.
- TAYS Team networks with NYSED Office of Special Education, Client Assistance Program (CAP), and local secondary education leadership to identify liaisons to provide IEP and other school records to avoid delays in student applications for NYSED/ACCES-VR services. SVRC TAYS continue to collaborate with local secondary education leadership to identify liaisons to provide a smooth transition of students with disabilities to Pre-ETS services to potentially eligible vendors to receive Pre-ETS. Examples of strategies utilized by the TAYS team to transition to virtual or remote outreach include: Utilizing virtual or remote platforms to attend IEP meetings with students;
- Developing online information sessions that were shared with school districts to assist students with disabilities and their families with applying for NYSED/ACCES-VR services;
- Coordinating with school personnel to identify potentially eligible students and connect those students with disabilities to vendors virtually;
- Holding virtual Statewide and regional vendor collaboration meetings to brainstorm efforts to reach unserved and underserved students in residential (i.e., foster care) and juvenile justice facilities; and
- Utilizing flexible service delivery models and best practices that came out of the COVID-19 pandemic to identify and conduct outreach to students with disabilities who would benefit from Pre-ETS and VR services.

Development of local school liaison to VR liaison information sheet is shared with NYSED/ACCES-VR District Offices and secondary education institutions.

NYSED/ACCES-VR manages the Career Counseling, and Information and Referrals (CCIR) centrally through a designated central office staff contact and a CCIR mailbox for providers and customers to submit a request for completing the CCIR process. NYSED/ACCES-VR reviews the request and provides CCIR when the CCIR eligibility criteria are met. Students and youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment are counseled on competitive integrated employment opportunities and the supports the NYSED/ACCES-VR can provide to them in regard to training and services that can be provided in support of a Competitive Integrated Employment goal.

Youth and students with disabilities seeking subminimum wage and requesting CCIR have a document review completed to verify that they received either transition services through IDEA or Pre-ETS through VR and have applied for and had an eligibility determination made for VR services. Those students and youth with disabilities who have not applied for VR services are supported through the application process with their local district office.

NYSED/ACCES-VR does not contract with entities defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

(K) COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(11)(E) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE HOW THE VR AGENCY WILL WORK WITH EMPLOYERS TO IDENTIFY COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITIES IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES; AND TRANSITION SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

NYSED/ACCES-VR has a Business Relations team that includes a Statewide Coordinator and placement and marketing representatives, known as Integrated Employment Specialists (IES), in the 15 District Offices and in 9 Satellite Offices. In addition, there is an IES 2 for four of the five regions of the State. The IES team assists individuals with disabilities by connecting them with potential employers. The IES team also provides businesses with resources and technical assistance which facilitates employment opportunities in competitive integrated settings.

NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to implement strategies with the other WIOA core partners for a collaborative approach to heightening the focus on business needs and to strengthen and streamline workforce system efforts. (Additional detail can be found in the Workforce Development Activities section of this Plan.) NYSED/ACCES-VR developed partnerships to support these efforts including Statewide disability employment training initiative with Cornell University; local job placement; and marketing initiatives with the Society for Human Resource Management and the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) unions across the State. In addition, NYSED/ACCES-VR is a member of New York Association for Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP). NYATEP serves a cross-section of the major titles of WIOA, including LWDBs, Career Centers, partner programs, and organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to work closely with NYATEP under WIOA implementation to increase communication and common understanding of the law across the four (4) titles. This work helps to support partners' understanding of VR services and inclusion of it within their local system.

- NYSED/ACCES-VR contracts with over 300 vendors across the State for the provision of a wide range of services, including opportunities for career exploration. Vendors partner and work closely with businesses and employers to provide career exploration, such as paid or unpaid internships, in competitive integrated employment settings. Some examples of

career exploration services vendors provide include: Paid and unpaid work try-outs and community work experiences; and

- Community-based work assessments that allow for observation while the customer is engaged in exploring work in a competitively integrated business setting.

Each year NYSED/ACCES-VR recognizes outstanding businesses during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This nationwide campaign raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities, past and present, and the businesses that hire them.

NYSED/ACCES-VR contracts with over 300 vendors across the State for the provision of a wide range of services, including transition services and Pre-ETS for eligible students with disabilities. These vendors partner and work closely with business and employers to provide transition services and Pre-ETS. NYSED/ACCES-VR Integrated Employment Specialist (IES) staff work directly with businesses across the State to identity work-based learning experiences and work readiness training opportunities for all customers including those receiving Pre-ETS. NYSED/ACCES-VR actively participates in NYATEP events that are specifically geared to youth and include the WIOA required core partners as well as the LWDBs. The TAYS staff work collaboratively with the NYSED/ACCES-VR IES staff to support the collaboration with business for opportunities for students and youth in addition to the IES staff.

(L) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(11)(C) AND (K), DESCRIBE INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH AND UTILIZATION OF THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES OF AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ARE NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM TO DEVELOP OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED EMPLOYMENT IN INTEGRATED SETTINGS, TO THE GREATEST EXTENT PRACTICABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

The NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs administers the TRAID program as the lead agency under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. The TRAID program's mission is to coordinate Statewide activities to increase access to, and acquisition of, assistive technology for people with disabilities. NYSED/ACCES-VR has a MOU with the Justice Center that supports the 12 TRAID Centers across NYS.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

NYSED/ACCES-VR does not currently have a formal partnership with USDA Rural Development, however, several district offices serve rural communities and partner with businesses, community organizations and government entities in these communities to provide VR services to people with disabilities who live in rural parts of NYS.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

NYSED/ACCES-VR works closely with several State agencies (i.e., OMH, OASAS, OPWDD) that provide services to individuals with disabilities, including out-of-school youth. NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to work with the Job Corps and Youth Build programs to best meet and serve the needs of out-of-school youth. NYSED/ACCES-VR has engaged in discussions with OCFS/NYSCB which serves youth in

foster care, in juvenile detention and in community supervision. Opportunities to expand these relationships and initiate new ones continues to be a priority.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

All NYS agencies must procure commodities, services, and technology in accordance with Article 11 of NYS Finance Law which states in Section 162 the following: "To advance special social and economic goals, selected providers shall have preferred source status for the purposes of procurement in accordance with the provisions of this section. Procurement from these providers shall be exempted from the competitive procurement provisions of Section 163 of this article and other competitive procurement statutes. Such exemptions shall apply to commodities produced, manufactured, or assembled, including those repackaged to meet the form, function and utility required by State agencies, in NYS and, where so designated, services provided by those sources in accordance with this section."

The preferred source State use contracting programs in NYS are the NYS Preferred Source Program for New Yorkers who are Blind and the NYS Industries for the Disabled (NYSID). NYSED/ACCES-VR fully complies with NYS procurement requirements and purchases from each of these preferred sources.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is the agency solely responsible for the administration of the State Medicaid plan. NYSDOH and the other State agencies that utilize Medicaid funding, the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the Office for Mental Health (OMH), work directly with each other on the provision of Medicaid funded services. NYSED/ACCES-VR works collaboratively with NYSDOH, however NYSED/ACCES-VR has more direct interactions with OPWDD and OMH with regard to the people that they serve and VR services that provide opportunities, to the greatest extend possible, for competitive integrated employment. Examples of partnerships between NYSED/ACCES-VR, OPWDD, and OMH that support opportunities for collaborations toward competitive integrated employment include:

- Many supported employment vendors provide services funded by all three (3) agencies. The three (3) agencies work closely as communication is important to ensure that to the extent possible vendor training requirement and performance expectations are compatible. Through training and accountability, the NYSED/ACCES-VR, OPWDD and OMH are working to ensure that quality services are delivered.
- NYSED/ACCES-VR, OPWDD, and OMH singularly and jointly present at New York Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE) events that draw CRPs from around the state focused on competitive integrated employment best practices.
- NYSED/ACCES-VR participates with OPWDD, OMH and the NYSDOL on the employment subcommittee of the Most Integrated Settings Coordinating Council (MISCC). The focus of this subcommittee is to ensure individuals with disabilities are able to be employed in competitive, integrated settings and reduce barriers that may limit these opportunities.
- NYSED/ACCES-VR works collaboratively with the NYS Governor's Office of the Chief Disability Officer on multiple initiatives surrounding inclusivity of people with disabilities including increasing the hiring of individuals with disabilities within NYS service.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

NYSED/ACCES-VR has longstanding partnerships with OPWDD, OMH, and OCFS/NYSCB. NYS has an established Employment First policy outlining strategies for the inclusion for people with disabilities in the workforce. Many of the policy's strategies build upon the existing interagency linkages and OPWDD, OMH, and NYSED/ACCES-VR continue to provide targeted, evidence-based employment services training to employment staff to support the goals of Employment First. OPWDD provides person-centered services, supports, and advocacy to individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. OPWDD works in partnership with NYSED/ACCES-VR to identify how the two systems can collaborate on employment for people with I/DD.

The interagency agreement allows for the maximum amount of choice by the individual as to which vocational and/or pre-vocational service best fits their need at a point in time. Throughout the process it is made clear that at any time, any person with a disability may apply for NYSED/ACCES-VR services. In addition to these efforts, NYSED/ACCES-VR and OPWDD have been working on ways to better align their systems and coordinate employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. This work includes cross systems training of staff, sharing of information about respective systems at program intake and creation of a data sharing agreement that will enable seamless transition from intensive to extended supported employment.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES;

NYSED/ACCES-VR has longstanding partnership with OMH and regularly discusses policies and procedures to best support clear communication and effective service provision. NYS has an established an Employment First policy outlining strategies for the inclusion for people with disabilities in the workforce, including people with behavioral health needs. Many of that policy's strategies built upon the existing interagency linkages and OMH, OPWWD, and NYSED/ACCES-VR. NYSED/ACCES-VR continues to collaborate with OMH and OPWDD through their Advancing State Policy for Integration for Recovery and Employment and National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network competitive integrated employment initiatives.

OMH provides a range of vocational services to people with a behavioral health diagnosis including individual placement, supported employment and benefits counseling. NYSED/ACCES-VR and OMH work together to ensure that the transition from intensive supported employment services to extended supported employment services funded by OMH is smooth for the customer and vendor. Supported employment services are provided to individuals with most significant disabilities, after job placement and extended services may be provided to youth with most significant disabilities by NYSED/ACCES-VR for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever comes first.

NYSED/ACCES-VR, in partnership with OMH, participates in the New York State Alliance for Rights and Recovery events, including its annual conference where NYSED/ACCES-VR staff directly engage people with behavioral health diagnosis to learn more about their service needs and ways to continue to support them through NYSED/ACCES-VR services.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

NYSED/ACCES-VR works closely with the WIOA core partners to fully implement the commitments as outlined in the 2026 Combined State Plan Modification. NYSED/ACCES-VR has provided strategies to the workforce development partners to assist individuals with disabilities by: presenting on a bi-monthly basis at the Career Centers virtual trainings about NYSED/ACCES-VR services, requesting and accessing reasonable accommodations, disclosing a disability to an employer, and State and federal employment incentives for individuals with disabilities, providing training resources for core partners' front line staff specific to working with individuals with disabilities, and providing education to local partners about the services and supports that NYSED/ACCES-VR provides in their region. NYSED/ACCES-VR is committed to continuing these types of training efforts, including those with OCFS/NYSCB, to support the WIOA core partners in providing services to individuals with disabilities.

In addition to training efforts, NYSED/ACCES-VR worked closely with the core partners, including OCFS/NYSCB, in the development and implementation of a standardized release of information form and referral process to be used by the WIOA partners. As part of a local workforce development board that piloted the use of this form, NYSED/ACCES-VR assisted in the development of best practices for the referral of individuals between core partners, including individuals with disabilities, to better support the coordination of the provision of services. As with the above cited training activities, NYSED/ACCES-VR will continue to work with the core partners on the use of the referral and release form.

NYSED/ACCES-VR will collaborate with NYSDOL on their SCION (Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network) to increase the availability and the capacity of Disability Resource Navigation service for individuals with disabilities at local Career Centers.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

NYSED/ACCES-VR collaborates with non-profit VR service vendors statewide to increase access to competitive integrated employment opportunities. Currently, NYSED/ACCES-VR contracts with over 300 Core Rehabilitation Service (CRS) vendors. Collaboration with CRS vendors expands NYSED/ACCES-VR's capacity and delivery of Pre-ETS, improves the quality-of-service delivery, and increases competitive integrated employment outcomes. The CRS contracts include specific VR service deliverables, criteria for monitoring contract compliance and criteria to monitor the quality of services. Payment rates were modified to be commensurate with similar service delivery systems that provide employment and pre-vocational services.

CRS offers customers a variety of employment supports, including vocational rehabilitation entry, assessment, assistive technology, rehabilitation technology, job preparation services, job placement, driver rehabilitation, adjunct services, and supported employment. Consistent with Federal regulations, supported employment intensive services are offered for up to 24 months and extended services are available to youth with the most significant disabilities for up to a maximum of 48 months or until the youth reaches the age of 25, whichever occurs first. Upon completion of the 48 months of service, or when the customer turns 25, that customer may transition to Supported Employment Extended Services for Adults provided by other funding sources such as OPWDD or OMH and NYSED/ACCES-VR when these other funding sources are unavailable. When vendors identify unmet business needs, they can develop customized employment opportunities to fill those needs that support the skills, talents, and interests of the customer.

NYSED/ACCES-VR also provides the five required Pre-ETS through the CRS contracts to students with disabilities who are potentially eligible and eligible for NYSED/ACCES-VR services. The CRS contract

has 218 vendors who provide Pre-ETS. In addition to CRS, NYSED/ACCES-VR also partners with community colleges to provide secondary and post-secondary students with disabilities Pre-ETS.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA,[17] and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
2.	In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit)[18] agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[19], the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations[20], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[21], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[22], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4.	The designated State unit, or if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);

[17] Public Law 113-128.

[18] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[19] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 CFR part 361.

[21] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[22] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 CFR part 363.

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

ASSURANCES

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

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
1.	**Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:** The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2.	**Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:** The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140.
3.	**Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:** The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	(a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). (e) as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. (j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. (l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A). (m) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.	**Administration of the Provision of VR Services:** The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	(a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. (e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs. (j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State: (i) has developed and will implement, (A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and (B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and (ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15),101(a)(25), and 113).

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	(iii) shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5.	**Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:** (a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.	**Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):** (a) The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.	**Provision of Supported Employment Services**: (a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the

The State Plan must provide assurances that:		
		requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A "baseline" indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, "baseline" indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as "baseline" based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as "baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA." The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as "baseline" for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as "baseline" for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	42%		45%	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,000		$6,200	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2024 State Plan.*

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

a. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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

☐ (A) is an independent State commission.

☒ (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council. In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	**Current Term Number/ Vacant**	**Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.**
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	Vacant	
Parent Training and Information Center	In Process	
Client Assistance Program	Vacant	
Qualified VR Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	In Process	
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	09/21/2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	06/30/2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	01/23/2025
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	

Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	1/1/2022 and 8/1/2023
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	08/01/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	1	06/21/2024
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	1	08/01/2023
State Workforce Development Board	Vacant	
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	11/17/2023

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), a division of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), held in-person public forums and statewide teleconferences in 2025 to gather input into the development of both the 2026 New York State Combined State Plan and the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Combined State Plan. Notification of the statewide teleconferences was distributed to all active participants in their preferred format. Other individuals and entities receiving the notice included: private agencies for individuals who are blind, independent living centers, members of the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and consumer advocacy group representatives.

The proposed VR portion of the Combined State Plan and the notification announcement of the statewide teleconferences was posted on the OCFS/NYSCB web page. These documents were also made available in alternative formats including audio, braille, electronic, and large print upon request. The teleconferences provided opportunities for statewide public participation. After the public comment period, the proposed plan and comments received at the forums and teleconferences were reviewed by the SRC. The SRC also provided input into the goals and strategies set by the Combined State Plan during one of their quarterly meetings.

For the 2026 Combined State Plan, OCFS/NYSCB will hold a statewide teleconference for input and comments from consumers and stakeholders. The SRC met on September 18, 2025, to review and provide input into the 2026 OCFS/NYSCB Combined State Plan for VR and Supported Employment Services. Members of the SRC received copies of the proposed Combined State Plan prior to and during that meeting.

Comment 1: In response to Goal 3, Strategy 1, under Description C: Goals, Priorities and Strategies, the SRC commented that they would like to see increased outreach to New York State school districts and the New York State Office for the Aging to promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services to potential participants not known to OCFS/NYSCB.

Response for Comment 1: OCFS/NYSCB continues to work with our outreach network and the New York State Department of Education and the New York State Offices for the Aging statewide to make more individuals aware of OCFS/NYSCB services. OCFS/NYSCB participated in the master plan for the aging process to continue to work towards this goal.

State Rehabilitation Council Goals and Objectives

The SRC and OCFS/NYSCB comprise a collaborative partnership. SRC members include current and former participants in the OCFS/NYSCB VR program, representation from Native American VR Programs, the National Federation of the Blind, American Council for the Blind, Statewide Workforce

Investment Board, Client Assistance Program (Client Assistance Program is currently vacant due to the governors approval process), Independent Living Centers, New York State Education Department (NYSED), parents of children with disabilities and representatives from business, industry and labor. The SRC assists OCFS/NYSCB in developing and reviewing the Combined State Plan, including OCFS/NYSCB's goals and strategies. The SRC provides policy advice and reviews consumer needs and satisfaction with services.

B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA). SECTION 101(A)(15), (17), AND (23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE VR AGENCIES TO PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF:

(1) The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:

(A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment; [text box]

(B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program; [text box]

(C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and [text box]

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

(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State. [text box]

Overview

This report details the findings of a comprehensive Statewide needs assessment conducted on behalf of OCFS/NYSCB. OCFS/NYSCB offers VR services to approximately 3,500 participants who are classified as legally blind. OCFS/NYSCB has seven district offices located throughout New York State. The Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) regulations require that a needs assessment be conducted every three years, the results of which are incorporated into the annual plan submitted by the OCFS/NYSCB to the RSA. Following a competitive procurement process, Apter & O'Connor Associates, Inc. (A&O) was engaged to conduct five studies comprising the needs assessment.

The report is as follows:

Executive Summary

This report details the findings of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted on behalf of the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB). This assessment addresses the vocational rehabilitation (VR) needs of individuals with blindness and visual impairments residing in New York State (NYS), including individuals with the most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities from historically marginalized and/or underserved groups, and youth with disabilities.

Focused exclusively on VR services, this report offers the OCFS/NYSCB findings from a range of analyses to help the OCFS/NYSCB better assist participants in achieving economic self-sufficiency and full integration into society.

FINDINGS

Successful Case Closure

A case closure is considered "successful" when the participant has completed the VR process and has been stable in their employment for 90 days or longer.

- VR participants between the ages of 23 and 44, those who graduated from high school, and those in postsecondary education services had higher rates of successful case closure than those without these characteristics.
- Additionally, participants who received an array of VR services, including disability skills and rehabilitation technology training, and job seeking and job placement services, had higher rates of successful closure than those who did not receive these services.

Individuals With the Most Significant Disabilities

The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet these criteria for most significant disabilities.

- Seventeen percent of the VR participants included in this analysis, or 861 individuals, had the most significant disabilities.
- Nearly one-third of those with the most significant disabilities had a secondary disability.
- Participants with the most significant disabilities frequently reported socioeconomic risk factors at intake. The most common socioeconomic risk factor reported by this group was low income (70%), while substantial numbers also presented as having low literacy (31%) and/or were long-term unemployed (20%).
- In general, participants with the most significant disabilities received services at a rate comparable to VR participants overall.
- Those with the most significant disabilities were significantly less likely to have a successful case closure than participants who did not have the most significant disabilities. Among those with the most significant disabilities who had closed cases, 23% were closed successfully, as compared to 35% for VR participants overall.
- The participants with the most significant disabilities who had the highest rates of successful closure were those who received job placement services (76%) or job seeking services (64%).
- These findings indicate that those with the most significant disabilities may require more intensive services than other VR participants.

Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Groups

- Based on analysis of available data, historically marginalized groups currently underserved by the VR program may include Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race, English language learners, and individuals with mental health or psychological disabilities.
- Members of historically marginalized groups were less likely to achieve successful case closure, whether or not their subgroup was found to be underserved in the VR program.
- Non-Hispanic Black participants were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic white participants to have successful case closures (though Black residents of NYS were not found to be a group numerically underserved by the OCFS/NYSCB). Additionally, those who had low incomes and those who had experienced long-term unemployment, homelessness, and/or contact with the criminal justice system were less likely to have successful case closures.
- Despite a lower likelihood of successful case closure across all of these groups, there was no indication that members of these groups were less likely to receive the most common VR services than VR participants overall. The exception to this is that participants with mental health disabilities were less likely to receive job seeking and job placement services.
- These findings suggest that demographic and socioeconomic risk factors predispose members of these historically marginalized and underserved groups to a lower likelihood of successful closure.

Youth with Disabilities and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

- There were 629 transition age participants (ages 14–21, up to the 22nd birthday) active in the OCFS/NYSCB VR system during the study period (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023).
- The total funding needed to serve an estimated 1,405 eligible students for Pre-ETS and other authorized services during the 12-month period could be up to $8,144,490. This is $4,498,308 more than the actual expenditure of $3,646,182.

Enhance Professional Development for OCFS/NYSCB Staff

- Staff indicated that more training and development are necessary and desired in certain areas, specifically to support successful case closure.

Strengthen Outreach

- This assessment found that while the OCFS/NYSCB has an outreach plan in place, efforts are needed to raise staff awareness of the plan and to support the implementation of outreach activities. These efforts are important for promoting awareness of OCFS/NYSCB programs and services across NYS.

Recommended Actions

- Conduct research to assess the appropriate intensity of specific services that will be effective for participants with the most significant disabilities.
- Ensure that staff are aware of fully accessible materials and resources, including where to locate them on the OCFS/NYSCB website.

- Offer job seeking and/or job placement services to VR participants as appropriate,[23] with a particular emphasis on providing those services to individuals with mental health disabilities.
- Expand outreach efforts to engage all eligible students in OCFS/NYSCB Pre-ETS services.
- Provide additional training for staff covering the following areas:
    - Serving individuals who have visual impairments as well as other types of disabilities, including developmental disabilities, and those with mental health issues.
    - Culturally appropriate services for individuals from marginalized communities.
    - Working with individuals who have experienced trauma.
    - Supporting individuals in improving their skills with computers and other technology.
    - Existing OCFS/NYSCB resources regarding transition and Pre-ETS services, including where to find contact information for counselors (OCFS/NYSCB website).
- Support implementation of the statewide outreach plan through additional resources. Communicate with staff about the plan and its key activities, with the goal of reaching eligible participants and connecting them with OCFS/NYSCB services, including those from underserved groups. Include an evaluation plan to assess the impact of different outreach strategies over time. Outreach strategies recommended by OCFS/NYSCB staff include:
    - Build stronger relationships with organizations serving individuals with disabilities and those serving marginalized communities.
    - Educate other providers of rehabilitative services about services offered by the OCFS/NYSCB and invite such providers and staff from other agencies to meet with vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) and present about their work.
    - Engage the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Board in reviewing and providing feedback on the existing outreach plan. Consider asking for regular input, in particular, from individuals who are legally blind from historically marginalized communities.
    - Consider how doctors' offices may be an important outreach point; when individuals become visually impaired, they are often unaware that the OCFS/NYSCB can intervene with services.
    - Given that participants' fear of losing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits frequently impedes successful case closure, outreach should proactively communicate facts about SSI and SSDI benefits eligibility and referral for benefits advisement.

Overview

[23] It is important to note that OCFS/NYSCB services are voluntary. The staff and participants work toward a mutual understanding and agreement of goals on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

This report details the findings of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted on behalf of the Office of Children and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB). The OCFS/NYSCB provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to about 3,500 participants with blindness and visual impairment through seven district offices located throughout New York State (NYS).

The federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires that a needs assessment be conducted every three years, the results of which are incorporated into the annual plan submitted by the OCFS/NYSCB to the RSA. Following a competitive procurement process, the Syracuse-based, New York State–certified woman-owned firm Apter & O'Connor Associates, Inc. (A&O) was engaged to conduct five studies comprising the needs assessment.

The long-term goals of the OCFS/NYSCB are to enhance employability, maximize independence, and assist in the development of the capacities and strengths of people who are legally blind in NYS. In keeping with these goals, one of OCFS/NYSCB's primary objectives is to assist participants in achieving economic self-sufficiency and full integration into society.

This needs assessment addresses the VR needs of individuals with disabilities residing within NYS. This population includes the following:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities;
- Individuals with disabilities from historically underserved racial and ethnic groups, and individuals with disabilities who have been otherwise unserved or underserved by the VR program;
- Individuals with disabilities who receive services through other components of the workforce development system; and
- Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities.

Study Purpose

This needs assessment and its five studies were designed to support and inform the OCFS/NYSCB's mission and its efforts to provide high-quality VR. Focused exclusively on VR services, including transition services, this report offers staff and contracted VR professionals a range of analyses, feedback, and insights to help them better assist program participants in achieving economic self-sufficiency and full integration into society. The needs assessment questions were determined by the OCFS/NYSCB, and the details of the study methodology were developed with A&O to address these questions. Information for the studies was gathered from various stakeholders, including OCFS/NYSCB district staff, VR counselors, transition counselors, an individual from the New York State Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Office, and individuals with experience serving youth in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and other populations.

Overview of Studies

Study 1: Secondary Analysis of OCFS/NYSCB Case Management System Dataset

Study 1 is a quantitative analysis of the VR case management system data designed to assess factors related to successful case closures for OCFS/NYSCB participants. "Successful closure" means a participant has completed the VR process and has been stable in their employment for 90 days or

longer. The findings of this study highlight services and participant characteristics that are associated with increased or decreased VR success and describe the mix of services typically offered to participants, with a focus on key subgroups, such as transition age youth, young adults, and those receiving SSI/SSD or other public benefits. This analysis identifies the variables that predict successful case closures based on correlational findings.

Study 1 also includes an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of supported employment and postsecondary education services, with the results showing:

- The average cost per participant,
- Services associated with successful case closure, and
- Cost per successful case closure.

Study 2: Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need for Supported Employment Services

The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet these criteria for most significant disabilities. The New York State Education Department defines supported employment in this way:

> *"Supported employment is competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, or employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual (including a youth) with a most significant disability who may be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. A key characteristic which distinguishes supported employment from other employment services is the provision of ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities to maintain employment."*

The purpose of Study 2 is to determine the VR needs of individuals in this group.

Study 2 addresses this question first through a descriptive analysis of the subgroup of individuals served with the most significant disabilities. This analysis addresses:

- The number of participants served who have the most significant disabilities that result in a substantial impediment to employment,
- Demographics of those with the most significant disabilities,
- The number of participants with each type of disability, and
- The presence of secondary disabilities.

Additionally, this analysis highlights the following information for this group:

- Services provided,
- The number of successful case closures,
- The number of unsuccessful case closures, and
- The number of open cases.

Finally, Study 2 examines participant traits or services that predict successful case closures for those with the most significant disabilities.

Study 3: Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program

Select demographic groups historically have been underrepresented in VR programs. This includes people who have experienced discrimination due to race or ethnicity; youth involved in the juvenile justice system; vulnerable youth such as those who are homeless; youth in foster care; English language learners; individuals with mental health disabilities; and those receiving public assistance, among others. The purpose of Study 3 is to examine the VR needs of individuals with disabilities who have been historically unserved or underserved. Study 3 addresses this question through a mixed-methods analysis.

The quantitative portion of the analysis identifies and details the following:

- The demographics and services currently provided to relevant subgroups, subject to the limitations of available data;
- The number of successful, unsuccessful, and open cases for these subgroups; and
- The estimated number of eligible individuals from historically underserved groups who remain unserved across the state.

Additionally, Study 3 includes a qualitative analysis of focus groups and key informant interviews. The purpose of this component of the study is to gather perspectives from OCFS/NYSCB staff and VR professionals on the following:

- The current outreach practices that are in place to reach individuals from historically underserved groups,
- Barriers that prevent the VR program from effectively reaching and serving these individuals, and
- Strategies and best practices to enhance outreach and engagement.

Study 4: Survey of OCFS/NYSCB District Offices on Successful Closures

“Successful closure” means a participant has completed the VR process and has been stable in their employment for 90 days or longer. The purpose of Study 4 is to determine the factors that may contribute to participants’ successful closure from the VR program, from the perspectives of OCFS/NYSCB staff who work directly with participants. The study also examines staff perspectives on the level of engagement from OCFS/NYSCB participants, which may affect the likelihood of success.

To address these questions, Study 4 distributed one survey to 58 members across seven district offices to gather and analyze perspectives on observed trends. Of these individuals, 41 completed the survey.

Study 5: Fiscal Forecasting for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Coordination for Transition Services

The purpose of Study 5 is to determine the VR needs of students with disabilities who are aged 14–21 (up until their 22nd birthday), and the amount of reserved funds necessary for ensuring Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to all students who may need them. Additionally, Study 5 investigates the extent to which Pre-ETS services are coordinated with transition

services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or 504 plans. IDEA and 504 plans are intended to guarantee that children with disabilities are provided with accommodations that will support their academic success.

To address these questions, Study 5 includes quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative analysis provides estimates of the following:

- The number of students who are legally blind and currently engaged in the OCFS/NYSCB system.
- The number of potentially eligible students who are not currently engaged, and
- The current cost of OCFS/NYSCB services and the amount of funds necessary to make Pre-ETS available statewide to all potentially eligible and eligible students of ages 14–21.

Additionally, a qualitative component examines the extent to which transition services currently are coordinated with services provided under the IDEA and/or 504 plans. This portion of the study analyzes focus group data and a survey of twelve transition counselors across NYS.

Study 1: Secondary Analysis of OCFS/NYSCB Case Management System Dataset

This study presents a quantitative analysis of the OCFS/NYSCB VR case management system data to assess factors related to successful case closures for OCFS/NYSCB participants.

Evaluation Questions:

- What are the variables related to successful case closures for OCFS/NYSCB participants?
    - A case closure is considered "successful" when the participant has completed the VR process and has been stable in their employment for 90 days or longer.
- Are supported employment and post-secondary education services cost-effective?

KEY FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics Associated with Successful Case Closure

- VR participants aged 23–34 and 35–44 were significantly more likely to have successful case closures than those of ages 45–54.
- High school graduates had a higher rate of successful closures than those who did not complete high school, but a lower rate than those with a four-year degree or higher.
- Participants who were residing in New York City had a significantly lower rate of successful case closure than those residing elsewhere in NYS.
- Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic/Latino participants were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic white participants to have successful case closures.

Services Associated with Successful Case Closure

- Participants who received one of the following VR services had significantly higher rates of successful closure than those who did not receive that service:
    - Job placement services,
    - Job seeking services,

- Rehabilitation technology training,
- Diagnosis/treatment services,
- Assessment services (provided by purchase), and/or
- Disability related skills training.

- Participation in some other state workforce development programs was associated with higher rates of successful closure, but this was not statistically significant.

Secondary Disability Characteristics Associated with Successful Case Closure

- Those with the most significant disabilities [24] were significantly less likely to have a successful case closure than participants who did not have the most significant disabilities.
- Those with any type of secondary disability were significantly less likely to have a successful closure compared to those with no secondary disability.

Socioeconomic Risk Factors Associated with Successful Case Closure

- The following socioeconomic risk factors identified at intake were significantly associated with a lower rate of successful case closure compared to participants without that risk factor:
    - Long-term unemployment,
    - Homelessness,
    - Prior contact with the criminal justice system ("ex-offender"),
    - Low income,
    - Low literacy, and
    - Single-parent status.

Cost-Effectiveness of Postsecondary Education Services and Supported Employment [25]

- Postsecondary education services are considerably more expensive per participant served than supported employment.
- Participants with bachelor's, master's, or other graduate degrees are more likely to have a successful case closure than those in supported employment.
- Despite a higher rate of successful closure among those who received four-year college or graduate school education, supported employment is dramatically more cost-effective in terms of expenditures per successful closure. For example, the cost of providing the supported employment program is approximately $5,560 per successful case closure, as compared with the cost of providing education at a four-year college, which is nearly $63,000 per successful closure.

Sample and Study Design

[24] The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet these criteria for most significant disabilities.

[25] Sponsorship in postsecondary education is based on a mutually agreed upon goal on the IPE. It can include undergraduate and graduate courses at an accredited university, college, junior college, online, or extension program and tutorial training.

This study consists of descriptive statistics and the results of univariate logistic regression models, which were used for statistical testing. For the cost analysis, the average cost per participant and success rate for each service were calculated, as well as costs per successful closure. For more detailed methodology, see appendix A.

The analysis of successful case closures [26] included OCFS/NYSCB participants who were enrolled in the VR program between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2023. Participants were included if their most recent VR cycle had at least four quarters of data, or if their most recent VR cycle was completely encompassed within the observation period.[27] These inclusion criteria resulted in a sample of 2,297 individuals with closed cycles. Just over 65% were unsuccessful closures (*n* = 1,499), while 35% were successful closures (*n* = 798). The characteristics of the sample are presented in table 1.1.

The cost-effectiveness analysis included all VR participants. If a participant had more than one VR cycle, costs were summed across all their cycles in the observation period, but they were only counted as one unique participant served.

Table 1.1 Participant Characteristics for Case Closure Analysis, by Closure Status

Participant Characteristics	Successful Closures *n* = 798	Unsuccessful Closures *n* = 1,499	All Closures *n* = 2,297
Sex			
Male	53%	55%	54%
Female	47%	45%	46%
Age (median)	41	42	42
Race/ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic white	46%	38%	41%
Non-Hispanic Black	23%	31%	28%
Hispanic/Latino – any race	15%	19%	18%
Asian	4%	3%	3%
Multiracial/other race	2%	3%	3%
Did not identify race	10%	6%	7%
Highest education level (at closure)			
Less than HS	10%	25%	20%
High school	48%	42%	44%
Some college – no degree	12%	15%	14%
Associate's degree	4%	5%	5%
Bachelor's degree	14%	9%	11%
Master's or other graduate degree	11%	5%	7%
Location			
New York City	43%	51%	48%
Rest of state	57%	49%	52%

DETAILED RESULTS

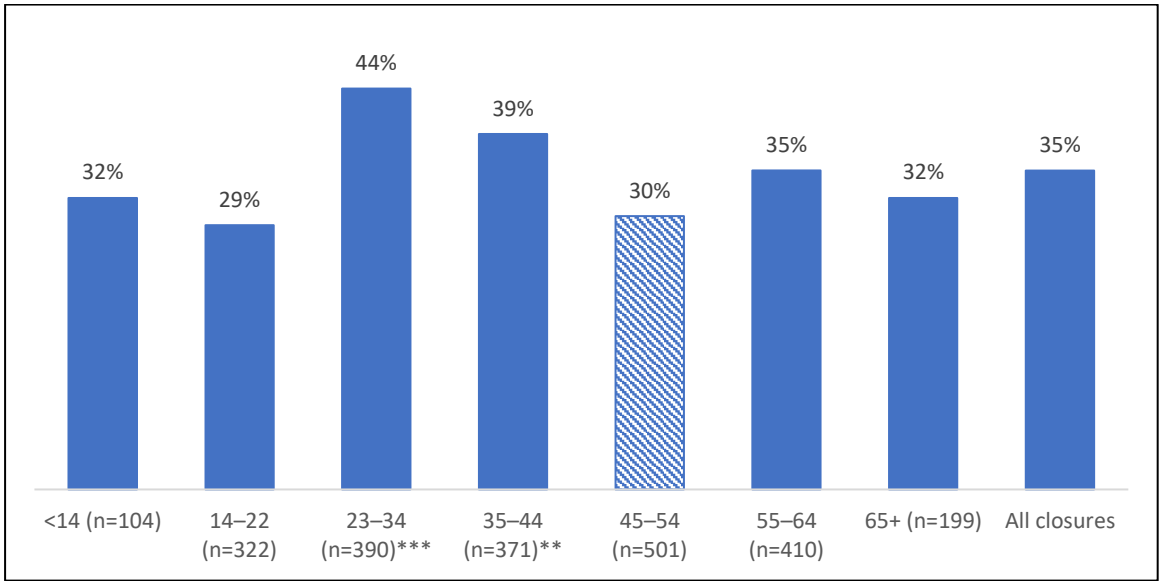
[27] That is, they had fewer than four quarters of data, but the observation period included their entire VR cycle; for example, if they began a cycle of VR services in one quarter and their case was closed the following quarter.

Demographic Predictors of Successful or Unsuccessful Closure (Figures 1.1–1.3)

Participants aged 23–34 had the highest rate of successful case closure (44%), corresponding with an age range during which people are particularly likely to enter the workforce. Those ages (35–44) were also significantly more likely than ages 45–54 to have a successful closure (39% and 30%, respectively).

Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic/Latino participants were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic white participants to have a successful case closure (28% and 30%, respectively, versus 39%).

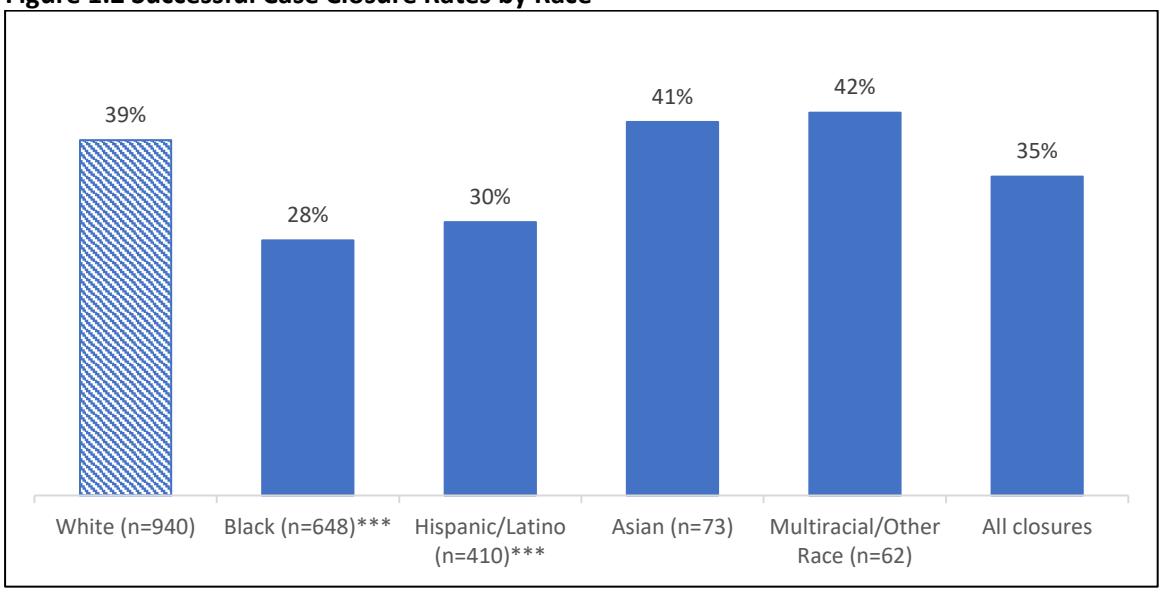
Figure 1.1 Successful Case Closure Rates by Age Category



* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

The 45–54 age range was used as a reference group [28] for the analysis and is indicated with the patterned bar.

Figure 1.2 Successful Case Closure Rates by Race



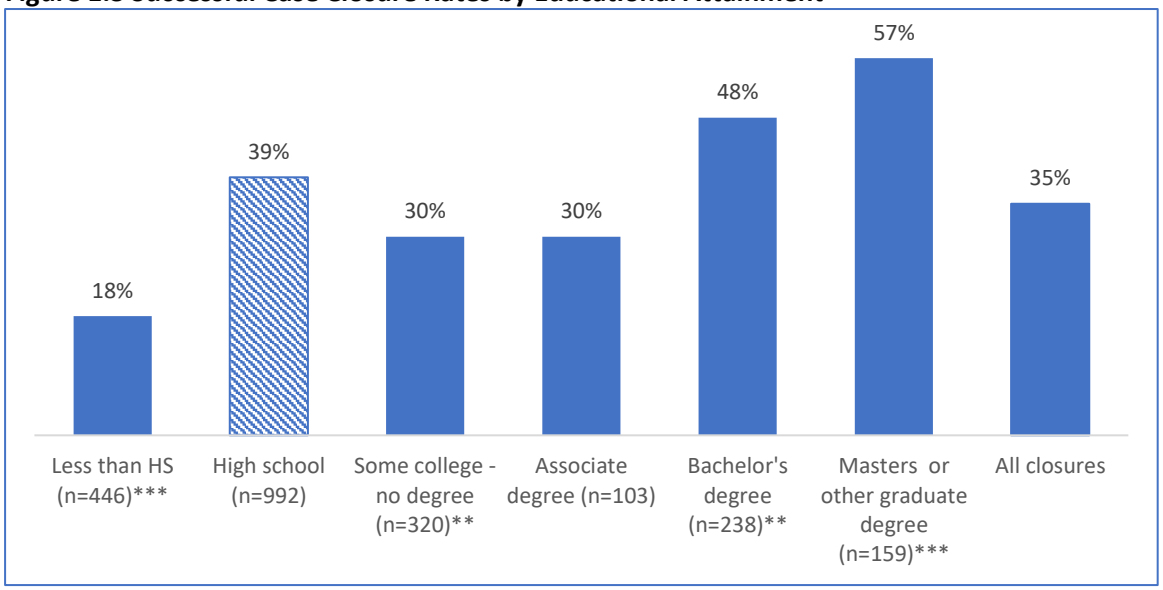
* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

[28] In logistic regression analyses, when a participant characteristic has more than two categories, one must be selected as the reference group to which the other categories are compared. The largest category is used as the reference group.

The “white” racial category was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated with the patterned bar.

Those who did not complete high school had a significantly lower rate of successful case closure (18%) as compared to high school graduates (39%). Those with some college but no degree, or with an associate’s degree, had a significantly lower rate of successful closure (30%) compared to high school graduates without college (39%). Those with a bachelor’s degree or with a master’s degree or other graduate degree at the time of closure had significantly higher rates of successful closure than those with a high school education (48% and 57%, respectively, compared with 39%).

Figure 1.3 Successful Case Closure Rates by Educational Attainment



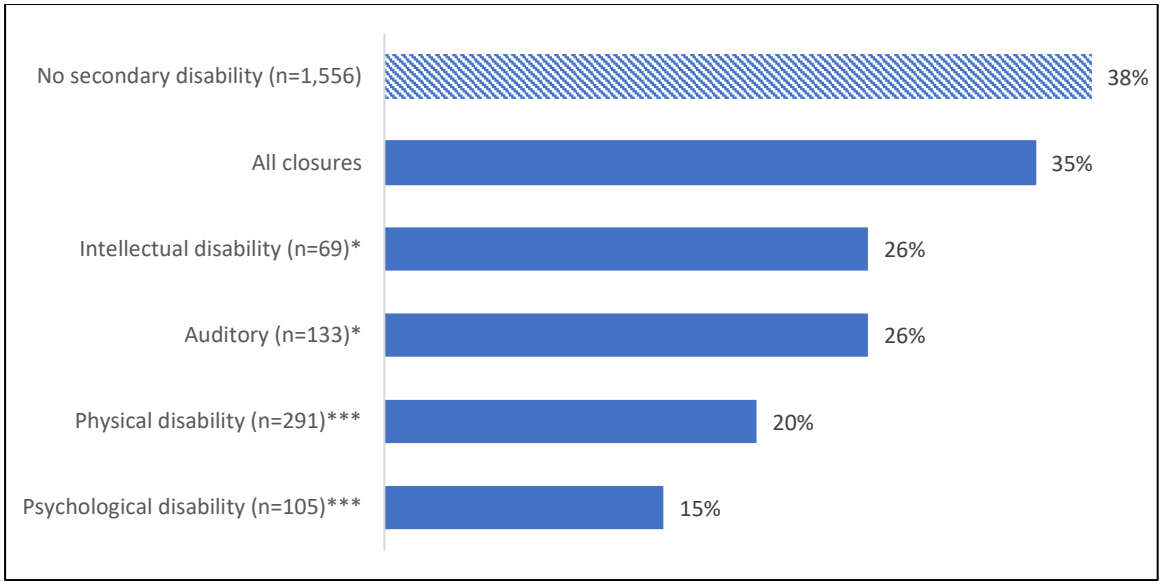
* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001
High school education was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated with the patterned bar.

Participants residing in New York City had a significantly lower rate of successful case closure than those residing elsewhere in the state (31% versus 38%; not shown). Men and women were not significantly different from one another in their rate of successful case closure (34% for men and 36% for women; not shown).

Disability Characteristics Predicting Successful or Unsuccessful Case Closure (Figure 1.4)

Those with the most significant disabilities were significantly less likely to have a successful case closure than participants who did not have the most significant disabilities (23% versus 38%; not shown). Those with any secondary disability had a lower rate of successful closures (15–26%, depending on type of secondary disability) than those with no secondary disability (38%).

Figure 1.4 Successful Case Closure Rates by Type of Secondary Disability



* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001
"No secondary disability" was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated with the patterned bar.

Socioeconomic Risk Factors Predicting Successful or Unsuccessful Case Closure (Table 1.2)

Many socioeconomic risk factors that were present at intake were significantly associated with lower rates of successful closure, including low income, long-term unemployment, low literacy, cultural barriers, prior contact with the criminal justice system ("ex-offender"), and homelessness.

Table 1.2 Successful Case Closure Rates by Socioeconomic Risk Factors

Socioeconomic risk Factors	% of successful case closures among those with risk factor (*n*)	% of successful case closures among those without risk Factor (*n*)
Low income	29%*** (1,484)	48% (779)
Long-term unemployment	18%*** (627)	42% (1,636)
Low literacy	24%*** (365)	37% (1,898)
Cultural barriers	37%** (312)	35% (1,951)
English language learner	32% (211)	36% (2,052)
Single parent	23% (150)	36% (2,113)
Ex-offender	15%*** (118)	36% (2,145)
Homeless	6%** (31)	36% (2,232)
Foster care youth	16% (19)	35% (2,244)
Exhausting TANF	20% (10)	35% (2,253)
Migrant worker or dependent	60% (5)	35% (2,258)

* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs (Table 1.3)

Participation in other state workforce development programs was not significantly associated with successful case closure. However, data on external program participation may be inconsistent or incomplete, and participant numbers are very small, which makes it difficult to achieve statistical

significance, even as participants in many programs had higher rates of successful closure than non-participants.

Table 1.3 Successful Case Closure Rates by Participation in Other Workforce Development Programs

Other workforce program participation	# participating in program	% successful case closures with program participation	# not participating in program	% successful case closures without program participation
Wagner-Peyser	40	33%	2,223	35%
Adult education program	37	43%	2,226	35%
Adult program	33	39%	2,230	35%
Youth program	13	54%	2,250	35%
Dislocated worker program	8	50%	2,255	35%
Job Corps	6	17%	2,257	35%

VR Services Predicting Successful or Unsuccessful Case Closure (Table 1.4)

Many common VR services were associated with a higher likelihood of successful closure.

Table 1.4 Successful Case Closure Rates by Participation in VR Services

VR service	# receiving service	% successful case closures with service	# not receiving service	% successful case closures without service
Disability skills training	956	40%***	1,341	31%
Diagnosis/treatment	766	43%***	1,531	31%
Rehabilitation technology training	724	50%***	1,555	27%
Job placement services	277	82%***	2,070	30%
Assessment	238	49%***	2,059	33%
Transportation	193	41%*	2,104	34%
Job readiness training	177	40%	2,120	34%
Assessment – in-house	175	39%	2,122	34%
Job seeking services	157	70%***	2,140	32%

Note: All services are by purchase unless otherwise specified.
* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

Cost-Effectiveness of Postsecondary Education Services and Supported Employment (Table 1.5)

Postsecondary education services are considerably more expensive per participant served than supported employment. Additionally, participants with bachelor's, master's, and other graduate degrees are more likely to have a successful case closure than those in supported employment.

Despite the higher rates of successful case closure for those who received a four-year-college or graduate school education, supported employment is dramatically more cost-effective in terms of expenditures per successful closure. For example, the cost of providing the supported employment program is approximately $5,560 per successful case closure, as compared with the cost of providing education at a four-year college, which is nearly $63,000 per successful closure.

Table 1.5 Costs and Outcomes Associated with Postsecondary Education and Supported Employment

Purchased service	Number served	Total 3-year spendin	Costs per participant served	All closures	Successful closures	Success rate	$ spent per successful closure
Four-year college or university training	283	$2,391,120	$8,449	62	38	61%	**$62,924**
Junior or community college training	71	$261,252	$3,680	11	2	25%	**$130,626**
Graduate college or university service	91	$1,602,041	$17,605	18	15	83%	**$106,803**
Supported employment	156	$116,726	$748	62	21	34%	**$5,558**

Study 2: Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need for Supported Employment Services

This study details the characteristics and needs of the individuals served by the OCFS/NYSCB who have the most significant disabilities,[29] as defined in the RSA 911 reports.

Evaluation Questions:

- How many participants in the VR program have the most significant disabilities, and what specific type(s) of disabilities do they have?
- What are the demographic characteristics of those with the most significant disabilities?
- What services are provided to those who have the most significant disabilities?
- Among those with the most significant disabilities, how many cases are open, and how many have been successfully and unsuccessfully closed?
- What participant characteristics are associated with successful case closures?

[29] The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet this criteria for most significant disabilities.

Key Findings

Demographic and Disability Characteristics

- 17% of the total sample of VR participants, or 861 individuals, had the most significant disabilities and met the inclusion criteria for this analysis.
- Nearly one third (32%) of those with the most significant disabilities have a secondary disability. Most commonly, this is an auditory or communication disorder, including deafness or a physical disability.
- Participants with the most significant disabilities represent a broad array of demographic characteristics, including a range of ages, education levels, races, and geographies. For instance, those with the most significant disabilities are split by age, with one third (34%) age 22 or under, another third (29%) ages 23–44, and the remaining third (37%) age 45 and older. Over one third have less than a high school education, while 39% have a high school education. Around one third (32%) of those with the most significant disabilities live in New York City, while two thirds (68%) live elsewhere in the State.
- The most common risk factor reported at intake by participants with the most significant disabilities is low income (70%). Substantial numbers also present as having low literacy (31%) and/or are long-term unemployed (20%). Some experience cultural barriers (17%) or are English language learners (12%).

Services Provided

- In general, participants with the most significant disabilities receive services at a rate comparable to VR participants overall.
- Over half of participants (51%) received disability skills training provided by an external vendor. The most commonly received VR services were disability skills training, diagnosis and treatment services, and rehabilitation technology training.
- Participation in other state workforce development programs was very limited (less than 3% in any of the applicable programs).

Successful and Unsuccessful Case Closures

- Among those with the most significant disabilities who had closed cases, 23% were closed successfully, as compared to 35% for VR participants overall.
- Among participants with the most significant disabilities, women were significantly more likely to have successful case closures than men.
- Those participants with the most significant disabilities with less than a high school education were significantly less likely to have successful case closures relative to those who completed high school.
- Participants with all types of secondary disabilities had lower rates of successful closure than those with no secondary disability, and the difference was statistically significant for physical disabilities and psychological disabilities.
- Black participants with the most significant disabilities were significantly less likely to have successful case closures than their white counterparts.

- While most socioeconomic risk factors at intake were associated with lower rates of successful case closure, only long-term unemployment and prior contact with the criminal justice system had statistically significant effects.
- Many VR services were associated with a higher rate of successful closures for participants with the most significant disabilities,[30] including:
    - Job placement services;
    - Job seeking services (purchased);
    - Rehabilitation technology training;
    - Job readiness training;
    - Transportation;
    - Assessment services (purchased); and
    - Diagnosis and treatment services.
- The participants with the most significant disabilities who had the highest rates of successful closures were those who received job placement services (76%) or job seeking services (64%).

Sample and Study Design

Individuals included in this analysis were those VR participants with the most significant disabilities whose most recent VR cycle included at least four quarters of data, or whose most recent VR cycle was completely encompassed within the observation period (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023). Based on these inclusion criteria, 861 unique participants were included in this analysis, or 17% of the total sample of VR participants. Descriptive statistics were performed to determine the characteristics of those with the most significant disabilities and the services they received. Additionally, data associated with participants who had closed cases were analyzed to assess factors that predicted successful closure. For the detailed methodology, see appendix A.

Detailed Results

Demographic Characteristics of Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities (Table 2.1)

Participants with the most significant disabilities represent a broad array of demographic characteristics, including a range of ages, education levels, races, and geographies.

- Clients with the most significant disabilities are about half male and half female (1% identify as neither).
    - Roughly one third (34%) are aged 22 or under: 7% are under age 14, and 27% are aged 14–22. Almost another third (29%) are aged 23–44; that includes 13% aged 23–34 and 16% aged 35–44.
    - Over half of the participants with the most significant disabilities are non-Hispanic and white (53%).

[30] The effects of participation in other state workforce development programs by those with the most significant disabilities are not analyzed, because the numbers are extremely small, but no effects were found for VR participants overall (see Study 1: Secondary Analysis of OCFS/NYSCB Case Management System Dataset).

- 38% of those with the most significant disabilities have less than a high school education, while 39% have a high school education.
- About one third of those with the most significant disabilities (32%) live in New York City, while two-thirds live in the rest of NYS.

Table 2.1 Demographic Characteristics of VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities

Demographic Characteristic	VR Participants with Most Significant Disabilities (*n* = 861)	All VR Participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Sex		
Male	49% (425)	52% (2,584)
Female	50% (434)	48% (2,414)
Age		
<14	7.3% (63)	7.5% (377)
14–22	27% (228)	19% (939)
23–34	13% (114)	16% (796)
35–44	16% (140)	15% (756)
45–54	21% (177)	19% (948)
55–64	12% (104)	16% (807)
65+	4.2% (36)	7.6% (380)
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	53% (453)	42% (2,115)
Non-Hispanic Black	23% (195)	28% (1,393)
Hispanic/Latino – any race	15% (129)	18% (915)
Asian	3.4% (29)	4.3% (216)
American Indian	0.7% (6)	0.3% (13)
Multiracial	2.9% (25)	3.0% (151)
Did not identify race	2.9% (25)	3.9% (195)
Highest education level		
Less than HS	38% (324)	29% (1,415)
High school	39% (334)	43% (2,102)
Some college – no degree	14% (122)	15% (760)
Associate's degree	2.5% (21)	2.9% (143)
Bachelor's degree	3.6% (31)	6.3% (313)
Master's or other graduate degree	2.3% (20)	4.4% (218)
Location		
New York City	32% (277)	48% (2,384)
Rest of state	68% (585)	52% (2,619)

Disability Profile of Those with the Most Significant Disabilities (Table 2.2)

Nearly one third (32%) of those with the most significant disabilities have a secondary disability. Most commonly, this is an auditory or communication disorder, including deafness or a physical disability. Participants with the most significant disabilities are more likely to have a secondary disability compared with VR participants overall (32% versus 18%).

Table 2.2 Secondary Disabilities Among VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities and VR Participants Overall

Disability characteristics	VR participants with the most significant disabilities (*n* = 861)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Secondary disability		
Yes	32% (272)	18% (867)
No	68% (571)	82% (3,942)
Type of secondary disability		
Auditory/communication	13% (112)	6.5% (327)
Physical disability	12% (107)	8.5% (423)
Psychological disability	6.6% (57)	2.8% (141)
Intellectual disability	5.1% (44)	2.0% (99)

Social and Economic Risk Factors of Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities (Table 2.3)

Participants with the most significant disabilities experience risk factors at a higher rate compared to all VR participants. Almost three-quarters of participants with the most significant disabilities have low incomes (70%), almost a third have low literacy (31%), and 20% report experiencing long-term unemployment.

Table 2.3. Socioeconomic Risk Factors at Intake Among VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities

Socioeconomic risk factors	VR participants with most significant disabilities (*n* = 861)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Low income	70% (597)	66% (3,263)
Low literacy	31% (268)	18% (873)
Long-term unemployed	20% (174)	17% (860)
Cultural barriers	17% (143)	13% (667)
English language learner	12% (103)	9.7% (482)
Single parent	5.9% (50)	6.3% (314)
Ex-offender	5.4% (46)	4.4% (219)
Homeless	1.8% (15)	1.3% (63)
Foster care youth	1.3% (11)	0.9% (43)

Exhausting TANF	s (s)	0.3% (15)
Migrant worker or dependent	s (s)	0.1% (9)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

VR Services Received by Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities (Table 2.4)

In general, participants with the most significant disabilities receive services at a rate comparable to VR participants overall. Over half of participants (51%) received disability skills training provided by an external vendor (by purchase). Over a third (39%) received diagnosis and treatment services, and 36% received rehabilitation technology training (both provided by purchase).

Table 2.4 Common VR Services Received by VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities

VR services received	VR participants with the most significant disabilities (*n* = 861)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Disability skills training (purchased)	51% (438)	51% (2,529)
Diagnosis/treatment (purchased)	39% (336)	42% (2,116)
Rehabilitation technology training (purchased)	36% (306)	41% (2,055)
Job readiness training (purchased)	15% (131)	14% (700)
Assessment (purchased)	13% (110)	14% (720)
Assessment (in-house)	9.3% (80)	7.5% (375)
Job placement services (purchased)	6.3% (54)	8.5% (425)
Job seeking services (purchased)	3.9% (34)	6.9% (343)

Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs (Table 2.5)

Very few participants with the most significant disabilities are enrolled in other state workforce development programs (2.5% or less in any given program). Given these low numbers, findings associated with participation in other state workforce programs were not statistically significant.

Table 2.5 Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs among VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities and VR Participants Overall

Other workforce program participation	VR participants with most significant disabilities (*n* = 861)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Adult program	2.2% (19)	1.6% (78)
Adult education program	2.5% (21)	1.7% (80)
Dislocated worker program	0.8% (7)	0.4% (21)
Job Corps	s (s)	0.4% (21)
Wagner-Peyser	0.8% (7)	2.0% (80)

Youth program	1.3% (11)	0.8% (38)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Successful Case Closures Among Those with Most Significant Disabilities (Table 2.6)

VR participants with the most significant disabilities have lower rates of successful case closures than VR participants overall (23% versus 35%).

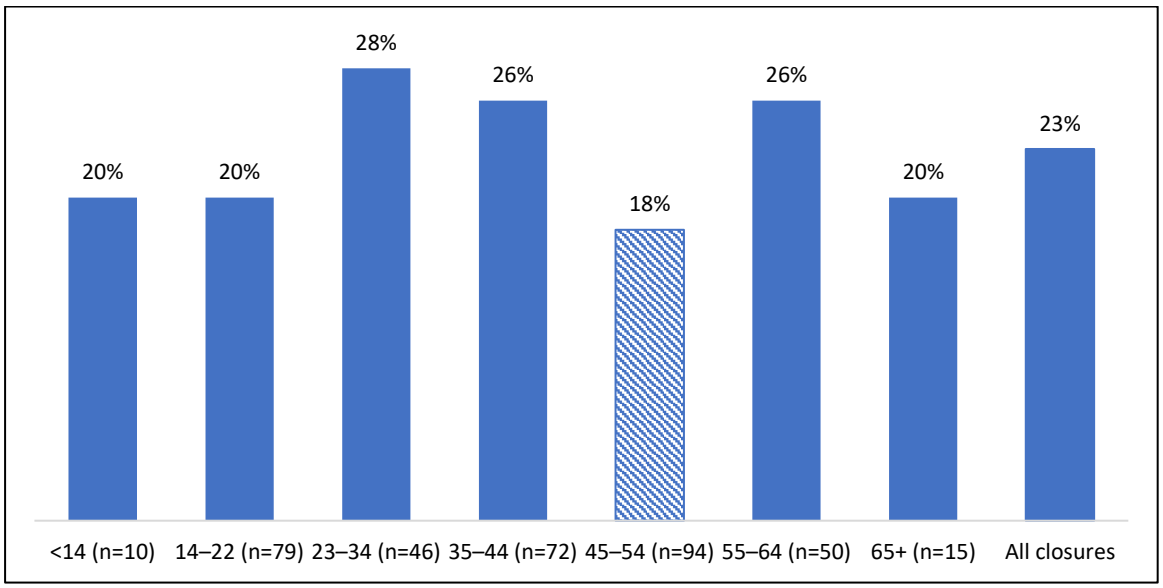
Table 2.6. Successful and Unsuccessful Case Closures among VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities

Cases	#	%
Open	430	¾
Closed	431	¾
- Successful case closures	98	23%
- Unsuccessful case closures	333	77%

Demographic Predictors of Successful Case Closure for Those with the Most Significant Disabilities (Figures 2.1–2.3)

Among participants with the most significant disabilities, women were significantly more likely to have successful case closures than men (27% versus 18%). Rates of successful closure differed from 18% for ages 45–54 to 28% for ages 23–34; however, these differences between age groups were not statistically significant.

Figure 2.1 Successful Case Closure Rates for VR Participants with Most Significant Disabilities by Age



The age range 45–54 was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated by the patterned bar.[31]

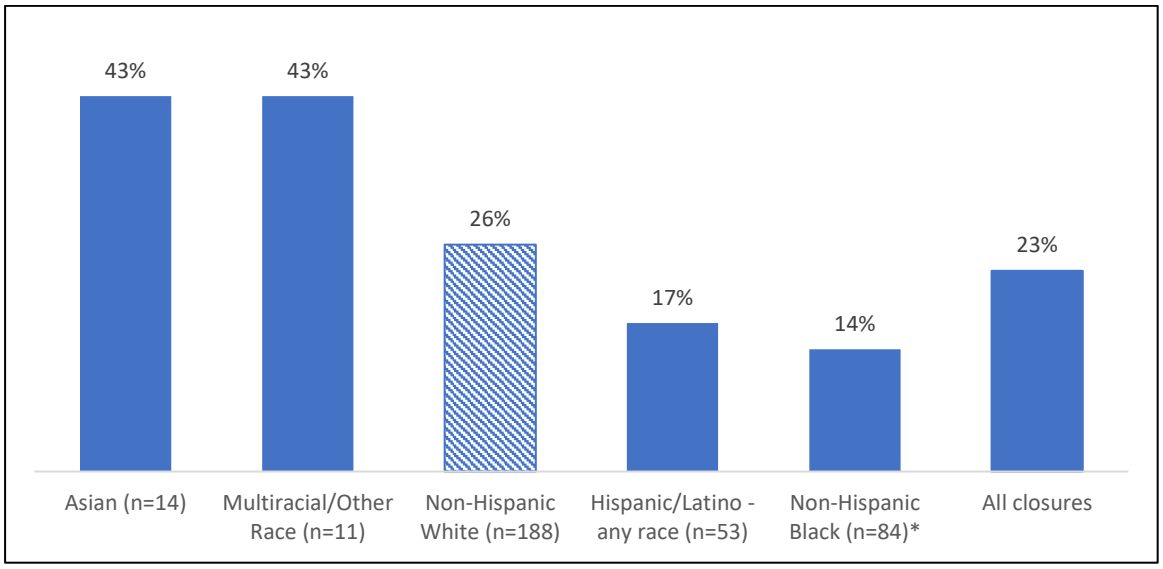
Black participants with the most significant disabilities were significantly less likely to have successful case closures than their white counterparts (14% versus 26%). Of those with the most significant

[31] In logistic regression analyses, when a participant characteristic has more than two categories, one must be selected as the reference group to which the other categories are compared. The largest category is used as the reference group.

disabilities, those identifying as Asian, multiracial, or an "other" race had the highest rate of successful case closures (all 43%), but this was not significantly different from non-Hispanic white participants, perhaps due to the small sample size.

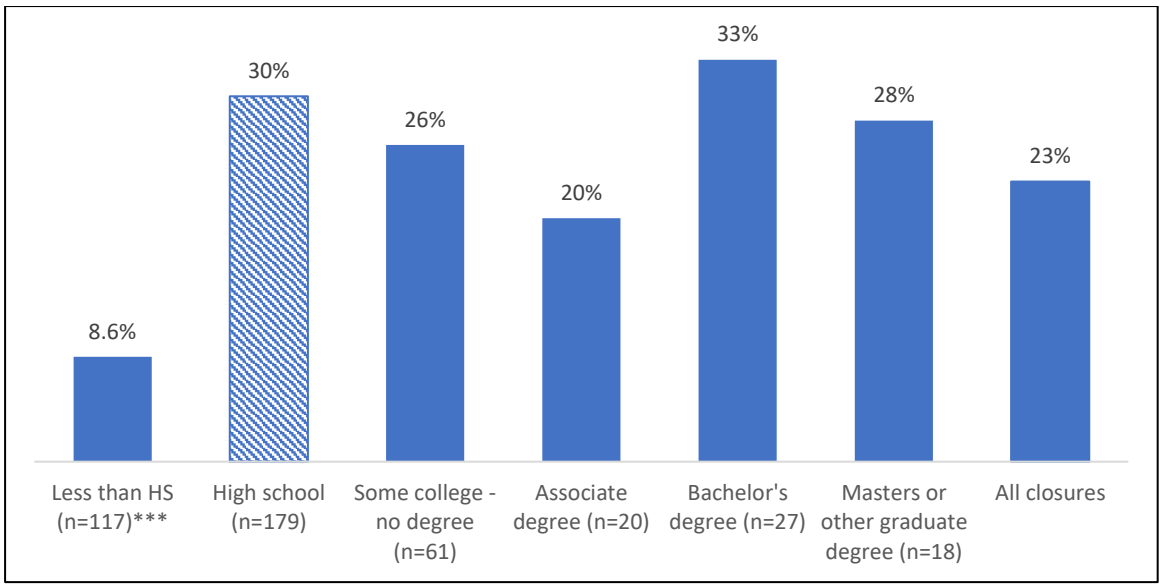
Rates of successful closure for participants with the most significant disabilities varied by educational level. One-third (33%) of those with a bachelor's degree had successful case closures, compared with 9% of those with less than a high school education. Those with less than a high school education were significantly less likely to have successful case closures than those with a high school education (8.6% versus 30%).

Figure 2.2 Successful Case Closure Rates of VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities, by Race and Ethnicity



* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001
Non-Hispanic white was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated by the patterned bar.

Figure 2.3 Successful Case Closure Rates of VR Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities, by Education Level



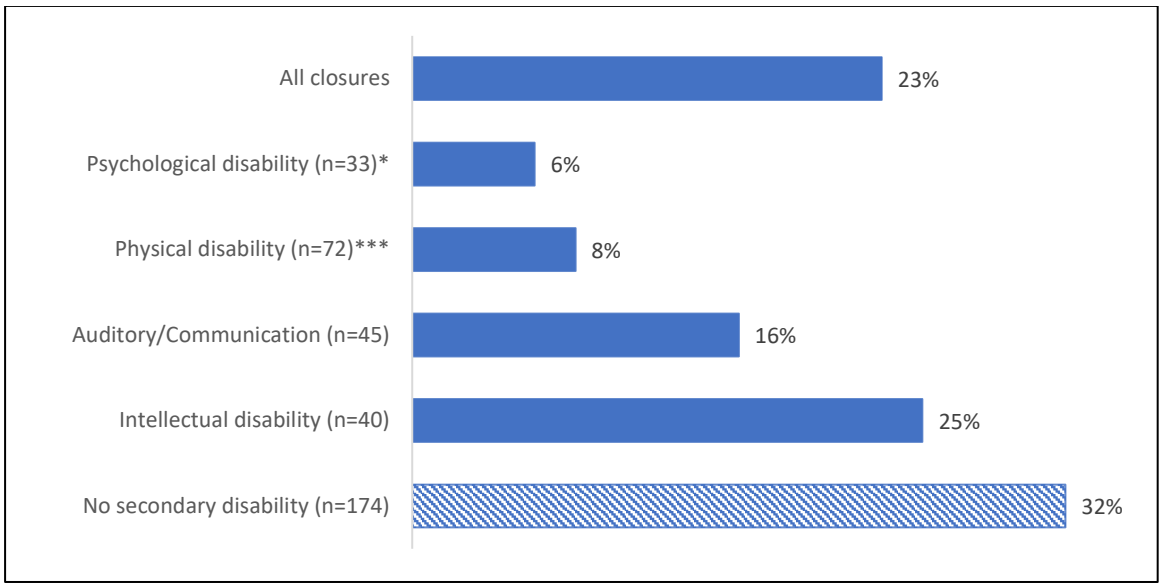
* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001
High school education was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated by the patterned bar.

Although those who lived in New York City had lower rates of successful closure than those who lived elsewhere in NYS (19% versus 24%), this finding was not statistically significant.

Secondary Disabilities and Successful Case Closure (Figure 2.4)

Those with a secondary disability were significantly less likely to have a successful case closure than those without a secondary disability (13% versus 32%). Participants with all types of secondary disabilities had lower rates of successful closure than those with no secondary disability. This difference was statistically significant for those with physical disabilities (8% successful closure rate), and those with psychological disabilities (6% successful closure rate), relative to those without a secondary disability (32% successful closure rate).

Figure 2.4 Disability Characteristics and Successful Case Closure for Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities



* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001
"No secondary disability" was used as a reference group for the analysis and is indicated by the patterned bar.

Socioeconomic Risk Factors and Successful Case Closure (Table 2.7)

While most socioeconomic risk factors at initial intake were associated with lower rates of successful closure, only long-term unemployment and prior contact with the criminal justice system ("ex-offender") had statistically significant effects.

Table 2.7 Successful Closure Rates Among Those with Most Significant Disabilities (*n* = 357) with and without Socioeconomic Risk Factors

Socioeconomic risk factors	# with the risk factor	Successful case closures with risk factor	# without risk factor	Successful case closures without risk factor
Low income	248	22%	109	27%
Long-term unemployed	122	12%***	235	29%
Low literacy	106	17%	251	26%
Cultural barriers	58	16%	299	25%
English language learner	39	15%	318	24%
Ex-offender	26	4%*	331	25%
Single parent	24	13%	333	24%
Homeless	9	0%	348	24%
Foster care youth	5	20%	352	23%

* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

VR Services Associated with Successful Case Closure (Table 2.8)

Many VR services were associated with a higher rate of successful closure for participants with the most significant disabilities,[32] including:

- Job placement services;
- Job seeking services (purchased);
- Rehabilitation technology training;
- Job readiness training;
- Transportation;
- Assessment services provided (purchased); and
- Diagnosis and treatment services.

The participants with the most significant disabilities with the highest rate of successful closures were those who received job seeking services (64%, versus 21% who did not) or job placement services (76%, versus 19% who did not).

Table 2.8 VR Services Associated with Successful Case Closure for Participants with the Most Significant Disabilities (*n* = 366)

VR service	# receiving the service	Successful case closures with the service	# not receiving the service	Successful case closures

[32] The effects of participation in other state workforce development programs by those with the most significant disabilities are not analyzed, because the numbers are extremely small, but no effects were found for VR participants overall (see Study 1: Secondary Analysis of OCFS/NYSCB Case Management System Dataset).

				without the service
Job placement services	25	76%***	341	19%
Job seeking services	14	64%***	352	21%
Assessment	31	48%***	335	20%
Job readiness training	30	47%**	336	21%
Transportation	37	41%**	394	21%
Rehabilitation technology training	93	39%***	273	18%
Diagnosis/treatment	97	34%**	269	19%
Disability skills training	151	27%	215	20%
Assessment (in-house)	24	17%	342	23%

* p<=0.05 & >0.01; ** p<=0.01 & >0.001; ***p<=0.001

Study 3: Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program

This study entails a mixed-methods analysis to identify the needs of individuals who, in addition to being visually impaired, are identified by the OCFS/NYSCB as historically marginalized and unserved or underserved, including:

- Racial and ethnic minority groups;
- English language learners;
- Individuals with mental health disabilities;
- Individuals receiving public assistance (i.e., SSI/SSDI, TANF, SNAP, HUD assistance); and
- Vulnerable youth, including:
    - Youth experiencing homelessness;
    - Youth involved in the juvenile justice system; and
    - Youth in foster care.

Evaluation Questions:

- What historically marginalized subgroups are currently underserved by the VR program, and what are their demographic and disability characteristics?
- What services are currently provided to members of these subgroups?
- Do rates of successful case closure differ between historically marginalized subgroups and VR participants overall?[33]

[33] The original evaluation plan included the question, "What factors are associated with successful case closures in these historically marginalized communities, and do they differ from the relevant factors among the population at large?" This question is addressed in Study 1.

What outreach practices are currently in place to reach members of these subgroups? What are the facilitators of, and barriers to, outreach in these communities, and which outreach strategies are more successful.

Key Findings

Marginalized Subgroups Currently Underserved by the VR Program

- Based on the analysis of available data, historically marginalized subgroups currently underserved by the VR program may include Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race, English language learners, and individuals with mental health or psychological disabilities.
    - **Hispanic/Latino** individuals of any race make up 27% of the visually impaired population in NYS, but only 18% of VR participants. This is the only racial/ethnic minority group that is underrepresented in the VR service data.
    - **English language learners** make up 10% of VR participants, compared to 21% of the NYS visually impaired population that may be considered less-than-proficient in English.[34]
    - **Individuals with mental health disabilities** make up 8.5% of VR participants, compared with nearly 28% of the NYS visually impaired population who reported their mental health as *not good* on at least 14 of the past 30 days. Also, nearly one-third of New Yorkers with visual impairments reported that they had been diagnosed with a depressive disorder.

Demographic and Disability Characteristics of Underserved Subgroups

- Compared to all VR participants, **Hispanic/Latino** VR participants:
    - Have a similar gender and age distribution;
    - Are slightly less likely to have the most significant disabilities [35] and secondary disabilities;
    - Are more likely to have low incomes and low literacy;
    - Have lower educational attainment; and
    - Are much more likely to live in New York City.
- Compared to all VR participants, **English language learners**:
    - Are younger and more likely to be Hispanic, Asian, or multiracial;
    - Have lower rates of educational attainment;
    - Are slightly more likely to have the most significant disabilities, and slightly less likely to have a secondary disability;
    - Are more likely to have socioeconomic risk factors, including low income, low literacy, cultural barriers, and single parenthood; and
    - Are more likely to live in New York City.

[34] The American Community Survey (ACS) data includes all those with visual impairments and is not limited to those who are legally blind.

[35] The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet these criteria for most significant disabilities.

- Compared to all VR participants, **those with mental health disabilities**:
    - Are more likely to be non-Hispanic and white,
    - Are more likely to have attended college, but without earning a degree,
    - Are more likely to have the most significant disabilities, and
    - Are more likely to be long-term unemployed, have low incomes, and have had prior contact with the criminal justice system.

Services Currently Provided to Underserved Subgroups

- **Hispanic/Latino** VR participants received VR services at rates similar to all VR participants. The most common services received by Hispanic VR participants were in-house VR, disability skills training, diagnosis and treatment services, and rehabilitation technology training.
- **English language learners** are slightly more likely to receive adult education services than VR participants overall and receive the most common VR services at a rate similar to all VR participants.
- Those with **mental health disabilities** were somewhat more likely to receive some of the most common VR services compared to VR participants overall, including diagnosis and treatment services and disability skills training. However, they were somewhat less likely to receive job seeking and job placement services, which were particularly correlated with successful outcomes.

Rates of Successful Case Closures for Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

- Overall, members of historically marginalized groups were less likely to achieve successful case closure, whether or not their subgroup was found to be underrepresented in the VR program. Specifically:
    - **Hispanic/Latino VR participants** were less likely to have successful case closures compared to all VR participants.
    - **English language learners** were slightly less likely to have successful closure compared to all VR participants.
    - **Individuals with mental health disabilities** were less likely to have successful case closure compared with all VR participants.
    - **Non-Hispanic Black VR participants**, although not underrepresented in the VR system, were less likely to have successful case closures compared to all VR participants.
    - VR participants **receiving some form of public assistance**, although not underrepresented in the VR system, had a lower rate of successful closures than VR participants overall.
    - **Youth in foster care youth**, although not underrepresented in the VR system, had lower rates of successful closures than youth not in the foster care system (see Study 1).
- Despite a lower likelihood of successful case closure across all of these groups, there is generally no indication that members of these groups are less likely to receive the most

common VR services than VR participants overall. The exception to this is that participants with mental health disabilities are less likely to receive job seeking and job placement services.

KEY FINDINGS FROM STAFF FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Current Practices to Reach Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

- OCFS/NYSCB has a Statewide outreach plan in place, which is currently part of the Combined State Plan. The goal of the outreach plan is to promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB programs and services for individuals in NYS who are blind. Activities in the written plan include data analysis, community engagement, tailored outreach, digital and social media presence, direct outreach to eye care providers, and multilingual, accessible marketing.
- Some staff reported that they attend community events such as health fairs and coordinate with accessibility services on college campuses, as well as post on social media.
- In some areas of the state, staff reported that there are strong partnerships at the local level with agencies such as independent living centers and local departments of social services.

Staff said they are unsure whether current outreach practices are successful, because there is no evaluation of the impact of these efforts.

Barriers to Reaching Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

- While the OCFS/NYSCB has a Statewide outreach plan in place, focus group participants reported limited funding and capacity for outreach activities. Focus group participants indicated that outreach efforts are not specifically focused on marginalized and/or underserved individuals.
- Focus group participants noted that staff may have a limited understanding of how to best serve marginalized groups—both generally and in a culturally appropriate manner—and thus may need additional training. A few particularly hard to reach subgroups identified as underserved by OCFS/NYSCB staff included individuals with mental health disabilities, those with developmental disabilities, those from certain cultural and ethnic groups (such as Native American and Hasidic Jewish people), those who are deaf-blind, and residents of rural areas.
- Other potential barriers to effectively reaching and serving historically marginalized groups cited OCFS/NYSCB staff included:
    - A potential distrust of providers;
    - Lack of transportation, particularly for individuals in rural areas; and
    - A general lack of public awareness of OCFS/NYSCB's services.

Recommendations to Successfully Reach Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

- To successfully implement the OCFS/NYSCB outreach plan, focus group participants noted that there is a need to raise awareness about the existing State outreach plan, and to support staff in implementing the plan with additional resources. They reported a need to strengthen outreach activities to reach all individuals who are legally blind, including those from historically marginalized and/or underserved groups.
- Other suggested strategies for improving outreach included:

- Provide training to staff specifically on working with people with disabilities, including marginalized and underserved groups.
- Engage the OCFS/NYSCB SRC and Executive Board in reviewing and providing feedback on the existing outreach plan. Consider asking for regular input from individuals who are legally blind, in particular from historically marginalized communities.

Build stronger relationships with other agencies and organizations serving individuals with disabilities and those serving marginalized communities.

SAMPLE AND STUDY DESIGN

There were 5,003 unique participants within the OCFS/NYSCB dataset. Table 3.1 details the numbers from historically marginalized groups who received VR services during some part of the study period (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023).

Table 3.1. Sample Sizes of Selected Marginalized/Underrepresented VR Populations

Marginalized/Underrepresented VR Population	#	% of all VR (*n* = 5,003)
Non-Hispanic Black	1,393	28%
Hispanic/Latino	915	18%
Youth involved in the juvenile justice system	6	0.5% ł
Youth experiencing homelessness	s	s
Youth in foster care	19	1.5% ł
English language learners	482	9.6%
Participants with mental health disabilities	432	8.6%
Participants receiving public assistance	2,856	57%

ł Percent of Youth participants under age 22 at start of most recent VR cycle (*n* = 1,272)

While data were available on youth in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness, and youth involved in the juvenile justice system,[36] the numbers were small and did not allow for meaningful statistical analysis.

An analysis was completed to identify and detail the demographics and services currently provided for the subgroups for which data was available. For each group, data was reviewed for:

- Demographics;
- Disability types;
- The specific services currently received; and
- The number of successful, unsuccessful, and open cases.

The representation of each subgroup in the VR program was also compared to estimates of that group's size in the state population overall, using the publicly available American Community Survey

[36] Just six youths under age 22 were recorded as having justice system involvement; fewer than five youths were recorded as homeless; and 19 youths were recorded as being involved with the foster care system. Involvement in the juvenile justice system is self-reported and therefore may be an underestimation.

(ACS) data and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data. Please see appendix A for more detailed statistical methodology.

Additionally, focus groups and interviews were conducted to gather qualitative feedback regarding underserved populations. Focus groups were held on September 13 and 20, 2024, with a total of five staff participants representing a range of geographies and roles at the OCFS/NYSCB. They were asked to provide perspectives and input on questions regarding the VR needs of unserved and underserved individuals, as well as on outreach to these populations. Individuals participating in focus groups and individual interviews included OCFS/NYSCB district staff, VR counselors, transition counselors, an individual from The Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Office, and individuals with experience serving youth in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and other populations.

DETAILED RESULTS

Historically Marginalized Subgroups Currently Underserved by the VR Program

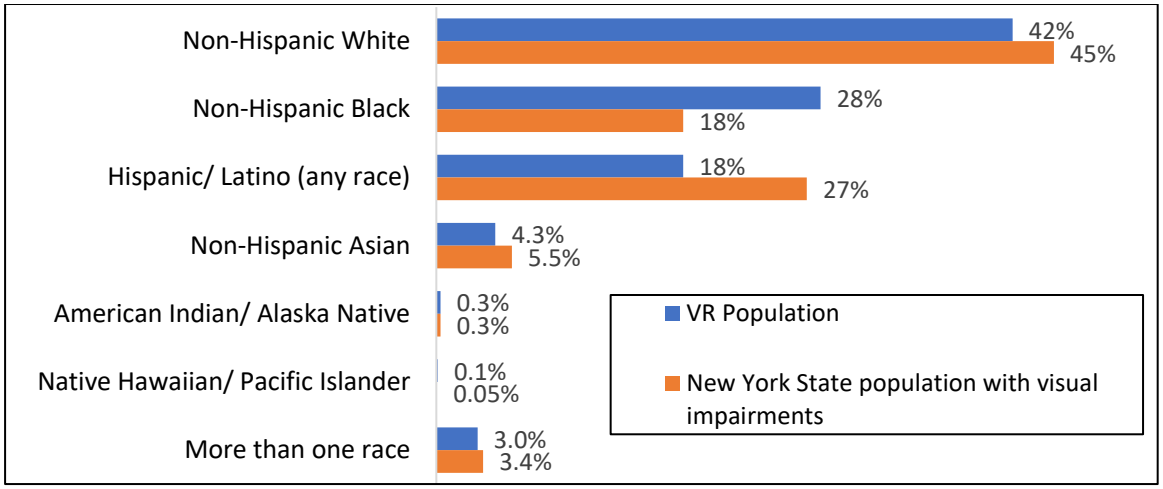
Analysis revealed that there are three subgroups currently underserved by the VR program: the Hispanic/Latino population, English language learners, and individuals with a secondary psychological or mental health disability.

As illustrated in figure 3.1, most racial and/or ethnic minority groups are proportionately represented in the OCFS/NYSCB VR service system; the exception is that **Hispanic/Latino** individuals account for 27% of the state's population of visually impaired people, but only 18% of VR participants.

Ten percent of VR participants were recorded as **English language learners** (ELL) at intake. However, among all New York residents with visual impairments ages 10 and older, a total of 21% are less than proficient in English (14% speak English *not well* or *not at all*, and another 7% speak English *well* but not *very well*). This suggests that English language learners are underrepresented in the VR program.

Individuals with a **mental health disability** account for 8.5% of VR participants, or 432 individuals. But, according to 2022 BRFSS data, 28% of New Yorkers with visual impairments reported that their mental health was *not good* on at least 14 of the past 30 days. Moreover, nearly one-third of New Yorkers with visual impairments reported that they had been diagnosed with a depressive disorder. Neither of these indicators necessarily attest that the individual has a functional disability, but they suggest that the prevalence of New Yorkers who face both visual impairments and mental health challenges is greater than the 8.5% reflected in the VR participation data.

Figure 3.1 Racial/Ethnic Groups as Share of VR Participants Relative to New York State Visually Impaired Population



VR participants receiving public support are not underrepresented in the VR system (56%, versus 26% of NYS residents with visual impairments, table 3.2).

- There are 2,856 participants in the VR program (56%) who are **receiving some form of public support**, including SSI/SSDI, TANF, or some other source. Just under 44% of VR participants do not receive any form of public support.[37]

Table 3.2 Sources of Public Support among VR Participants vs. New York Residents with Visual Impairments Overall

Sources of public support	VR participants		NYS population with visual impairment
SOME PUBLIC SUPPORT ǂ	2,856	56%	26%
SSI (Supplementary Security Income)	1,505	30%	16%
SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) ǂǂ	1,303	26%	15%
TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)	140	2.8%	5.8%
Other public support	479	9.5%	¾
NO PUBLIC SUPPORT	2,199	44%	74%

ǂ Sources of public support are not mutually exclusive, and many individuals with visual impairments receive income from more than one of these sources.

ǂǂ Only reported here for those under age 62, as ACS does not distinguish between Social Security Disability Income and regular Social Security retirement income.

Demographic and Disability Characteristics of Underserved Subgroups

Hispanic/Latino VR participants were the sole ethnic or racial subgroup that emerged as potentially underserved by the VR system. Demographics of this group are detailed in tables 3.3 through 3.5. Compared with all VR participants, Hispanic/Latino VR participants:

- Have a similar gender and age distribution;
- Are much more likely to live in New York City (70%, versus 48% of VR participants overall);

[37] The RSA 911 report does not contain information about participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) or public housing support.

- Are more likely to have a low income (74%, versus 66% of VR participants overall);
- Are slightly more likely to have a low literacy level (28%, versus 18% of VR participants overall);
- Are slightly less likely to have the most significant disabilities and secondary disabilities; and
- On average, have a lower level of educational attainment.

Table 3.3 Demographic Characteristics of Hispanic/Latino VR Participants Relative to All VR Participants

Demographics	Hispanic/Latino VR participants (*n* = 915)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Sex		
Male	53% (488)	52% (2,584)
Female	47% (427)	48% (2,413)
Age		
<14	9.3% (85)	7.5% (377)
14–22	22% (198)	19% (939)
23–34	20% (186)	16% (796)
35–44	18% (164)	15% (756)
45–54	16% (150)	19% (948)
55–64	12% (110)	16% (807)
65+	2.4% (22)	7.6% (380)
Highest education level		
Less than HS	38% (341)	29% (1,415)
High school	37% (337)	43% (2,102)
Some college – no degree	15% (140)	15% (760)
Associate degree	2.4% (22)	2.9% (143)
Bachelor's degree	4.3% (39)	6.3% (313)
Master's or other graduate degree	3.3% (30)	4.4% (218)
Location		
New York City	70% (642)	48% (2,384)
Rest of state	30% (273)	52% (2,619)

Table 3.4 Disability Characteristics of Hispanic/Latino VR Participants Relative to All VR Participants

Disability characteristics	Hispanic/Latino participants (*n* = 915)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Most significant disabilities		
Yes	14% (129)	17% (861)

No	86% (785)	83% (4,136)
Secondary disability		
Yes	14% (121)	18% (867)
No	86% (764)	82% (3,942)
Type of secondary disability		
Auditory/communication	5.9% (54)	6.5% (327)
Physical disability	6.6% (60)	8.5% (423)
Psychological disability	2.5% (23)	2.8% (141)
Intellectual disability	1.9% (17)	2.0% (99)

Table 3.5 Socioeconomic Risk Factors of Hispanic/Latino VR Participants Relative to All VR Participants

Socioeconomic risk factors	Hispanic/Latino participants (*n* = 915)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Long-term unemployed	18% (167)	17.3% (860)
Foster care youth	1.0% (9)	0.9% (43)
Homeless	1.6% (15)	1.3% (63)
Ex-offender	2.5% (23)	4.4% (219)
Low income	74% (673)	66% (3,263)
English language learner	21% (191)	9.7% (482)
Low literacy	28% (254)	18% (873)
Cultural barriers	16% (144)	13% (667)
Single parent	9.1% (83)	6.3% (314)

English language learners (ELL) were another subgroup identified as underserved by the VR system. Demographic characteristics of this group are detailed in tables 3.6 through 3.8. Compared to all VR participants, ELL participants:

- Are younger than the overall VR population (median age of 36 versus 40);
- Are more likely to be Hispanic or Asian than the VR population overall;
- Are more likely to have less than a high school education (45% versus 29%);
- Are more likely to live in New York City (66% versus 48%);
- Are slightly more likely to have the most significant disabilities (21% versus 17%);
- Are twice as likely to have a secondary disability (38% versus 18%); and
- Are more likely to experience multiple socioeconomic risk factors.

Table 3.6 Demographic Characteristics of English Language Learner VR Participants

Demographics	ELL participants (*n* = 482)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Sex		

Male	50% (243)	52% (2,584)
Female	50% (239)	48% (2,414)
Age		
Median age	36	40
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	20% (96)	42% (2,115)
Non-Hispanic Black	19% (91)	28% (1,393)
Hispanic/Latino – any race	40% (191)	18% (915)
Asian	13% (64)	4.3% (216)
American Indian	s (s)	0.3% (13)
Multiracial	4.1% (20)	3.0% (151)
Did not identify race	3.9% (19)	3.9% (195)
Highest education level		
Less than HS	45% (218)	29% (1,415)
High school	32% (155)	43% (2,102)
Some college – no degree	11% (55)	15% (760)
Associate's degree	2.9% (14)	2.9% (143)
Bachelor's degree	5.2% (25)	6.3% (313)
Master's or other graduate degree	2.9% (14)	4.4% (218)
Location		
New York City	66% (318)	48% (2,384)
Rest of state	34% (164)	52% (2,619)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Table 3.7 Disability Characteristics of English Language Learners VR Participants

Disability characteristics	ELL participants (*n* = 482)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Most significant disabilities		
Yes	21% (103)	17% (861)
No	79% (379)	83% (4,136)
Secondary disability		
Yes	38% (183)	18% (867)
No	62% (299)	82% (3,942)
Type of secondary disability		
Physical disability	19% (90)	8.5% (423)
Intellectual disability	5.0% (24)	2.0% (99)
Psychological disability	7.9% (38)	2.8% (141)
Auditory/communication disability	8.1% (39)	6.5% (327)

Table 3.8 English Language Learner VR Participants' Socioeconomic Risk Factors at Intake

Socioeconomic risk factors	ELL participants (*n* = 482)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Long-term unemployed	22% (104)	17% (860)
Foster care	1.5% (7)	0.9% (43)
Ex-offender	1.7% (8)	4.4% (219)
Homeless	2.1% (10)	1.3% (63)
Low income	78% (374)	66% (3,263)
Low literacy	85% (410)	18% (873)
Cultural barriers	45% (215)	13% (667)
Single parent	9.8% (47)	6.3% (314)

Participants with mental health disabilities or secondary disabilities were the third subgroup identified as underserved by the VR system. Demographic characteristics of this subgroup are detailed in tables 3.9 through 3.11. Compared with all VR participants, those with mental health disabilities:

- Are more likely to be non-Hispanic and white (48% versus 42%);
- Are more likely to have some college but no degree (21% versus 15%);
- Are more likely to have the most significant disabilities (27% versus 17%);
- Are more likely to experience long-term unemployment (24% versus 17%), to have prior contact with the criminal justice system ("ex-offender" 11% versus 4.4%), and to have a low income (74% versus 66% of VR participants overall); and
- Are considerably less likely to live in New York City (33% versus 48%).

Table 3.9 Demographic Characteristics of VR Participants with Mental Health Disabilities

Demographics	Participants with mental health disabilities (*n* = 432)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Sex		
Male	51% (217)	52% (2,584)
Female	50% (212)	48% (2,414)
Age		
Median age	38.0	40.0
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	48% (204)	42% (2,115)
Non-Hispanic Black	25% (107)	28% (1,393)
Hispanic/Latino – any race	16% (67)	18% (915)
Asian	2.3% (10)	4.3% (216)
American Indian	s (s)	0.3% (13)
Multiracial	4.9% (21)	3.0% (151)

Did not identify race	3.5% (15)	3.9% (195)
Highest education level		
Less than HS	29% (123)	29% (1,415)
High school	41% (172)	43% (2,102)
Some college – no degree	21% (91)	15% (760)
Associate's degree	3.0% (13)	2.9% (143)
Bachelor's degree	3.7% (16)	6.3% (313)
Master's or other graduate degree	2.6% (11)	4.4% (218)
Location		
New York City	33% (143)	48% (2,384)
Rest of state	67% (289)	52% (2,619)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Table 3.10 Disability Characteristics of VR Participants with Mental Health Disabilities

Most significant disabilities	Participants with mental health disabilities (*n* = 432)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	**% (#)**
Yes	27% (115)	17% (861)
No	73% (316)	83% (4,136)

Table 3.11 Socioeconomic Risk Factors of VR Participants with Mental Health Disabilities at Intake

Socioeconomic risk factors	Participants with mental health disabilities (*n* = 432)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	**% (#)**
Long-term unemployed	24% (101)	17% (860)
Foster care	s (s)	0.9% (43)
Ex-offender	11% (48)	4.4% (219)
Homeless	2.6% (11)	1.3% (63)
English language learner	8.9% (38)	9.7% (482)
Cultural barriers	15% (66)	13% (667)
Low income	74% (316)	66% (3,263)
Low literacy	20% (87)	18% (873)
Single parent	7.7% (33)	6.3% (314)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Services Provided to Members of Underserved Subgroups

Hispanic/Latino VR participants received VR services at similar rates relative to all VR participants (table 3.12).

Table 3.12 VR Services Received by Hispanic/Latino VR Participants

VR services received	Hispanic/Latino participants (*n* = 915)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Diagnosis/treatment – purchase	44% (398)	42% (2,116)
Disability skills training – purchase	52% (479)	51% (2,529)
Rehabilitation technology training – purchase	40% (367)	41% (2,055)
Assessment – in-house	7.7% (70)	7.5% (375)
Assessment – purchase	18% (163)	14% (720)
Job seeking services – purchase	7.8% (71)	6.9% (343)
Job placement services – purchase	10% (94)	8.5% (425)
Job readiness training – purchase	17% (153)	14% (700)

Rates of enrollment in other state workforce development programs by Hispanic/Latino VR participants was consistent with the VR population overall (table 3.13).

Table 3.13 Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs among Hispanic/Latino VR Participants, Compared to All VR Participants

Other workforce program participation	Hispanic/Latino participants		All VR participants
	#	%	%
Adult program	18	2.0%	1.6%
Adult education program	14	1.5%	1.7%
Dislocated worker program	5	0.5%	0.4%
Job Corps	s (s)	s (s)	0.4%
Wagner-Peyser	8	0.9%	2.0%
Youth program	6	0.7%	0.8%

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

ELL VR participants received the most common VR services at rates similar to VR participants overall (table 3.14). Additionally, they were slightly more likely to participate in the adult education program (table 3.15).

Table 3.14 Most Common VR Services Received by English Language Learners

VR services received	ELL participants (*n* = 482)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Diagnosis/treatment – purchase	40% (192)	42% (2,116)
Disability skills training – purchase	52% (248)	51% (2,529)
Rehabilitation technology training – purchase	40% (191)	41% (2,055)
Assessment – in-house	11% (53)	7.5% (375)
Assessment – purchase	15% (70)	14% (720)
Job seeking services – purchase	6.8% (33)	6.9% (343)

Job placement services – purchase	10% (48)	8.5% (425)
Job readiness training – purchase	16% (79)	14% (700)

Table 3.15 English Language Learners' Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs

Other workforce program participation	ELL participants (*n* = 482)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Adult program	1.2% (6)	1.6% (78)
Adult education program	2.5% (12)	1.7% (80)
Dislocated worker program	s (s)	0.4% (21)
Job Corps	s (s)	0.4% (21)
Wagner-Peyser	s (s)	2.0% (80)
Youth program	1.0% (5)	0.8% (38)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Those with **mental health disabilities** were somewhat more likely to receive some of the most common VR services relative to VR participants overall, such as diagnosis and treatment services and disability skills training. However, they were somewhat *less likely* to receive job seeking and job placement services, which were particularly correlated with successful outcomes (table 3.16).

Table 3.16 Receipt of Most Common VR Services by Participants with Mental Health Disabilities

VR services received	Participants with mental health disabilities (*n* = 432)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)
	% (#)	% (#)
Diagnosis/treatment – purchase	48% (205)	42% (2,116)
Disability skills training – purchase	58% (250)	51% (2,529)
Rehabilitation technology training – purchase	41% (178)	41% (2,055)
Assessment – in-house	6.0% (26)	7.5% (375)
Assessment – purchase	14% (60)	14% (720)
Job seeking services – purchase	4.6% (20)	6.9% (343)
Job placement services – purchase	4.6% (20)	8.5% (425)
Job readiness training – purchase	15% (64)	14% (700)

Participants with mental health disabilities were slightly more likely to participate in the Wagner-Peyser, adult education, and youth programs, but participation in all of these remained low (table 3.17).

Table 3.17 Participation in Other State Workforce Development Programs by VR Participants with Mental Health Disabilities

Workforce development programs	Participants with mental health disabilities (*n* = 432)	All VR participants (*n* = 5,003)

	% (#)	% (#)
Adult program	1.6% (7)	1.6% (78)
Adult education program	2.1% (9)	1.7% (80)
Dislocated worker program	s (s)	0.4% (21)
Job Corps	s (s)	0.4% (21)
Wagner-Peyser	2.6% (11)	2.0% (80)
Youth program	1.2% (5)	0.8% (38)

s = numbers are suppressed due to counts fewer than 5.

Successful Case Closures for Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

Overall, members of historically marginalized groups were less likely to achieve successful case closure regardless of whether they were found to be underrepresented (tables 3.18–3.22):

- **Hispanic/Latino VR participants** were less likely to have successful case closures compared to all VR participants (29% versus 35%).
- **English language learners** were slightly less likely to have successful closure compared to all VR participants (32% versus 35%).
- **Individuals with mental health disabilities** were less likely to have successful case closure compared with all VR participants (20% versus 35%).
- **Non-Hispanic Black VR participants**, though not underrepresented in the VR system, were less likely to have successful case closures compared to all VR participants (27% versus 35%).
- VR participants who were **receiving some form of public assistance**, though not underrepresented in the VR system, had a lower rate of successful closures than VR participants overall (27% versus 35%).
- **Youth who were in foster care at the time of their first intake**, though not underrepresented in the VR system, had lower rates of successful case closures than youth not in the foster care system (see Study 1).[38]

Table 3.18 Successful Case Closures Among Hispanic/Latino VR Participants

All cases among Hispanic/Latino VR participants	Hispanic/ Latino participants	All VR participants
	% (#)	% (#)
Open cases	50% (459)	47% (2,329)
Closed cases	51% (468)	53% (2,674)
Successful closures	15% (134)	18% (915)
Unsuccessful closures	36% (334)	35% (1,759)
Successful as % of all closures	**29%**	**35%**

[38] The exact number of foster care youth under age 22 with successful case closures is not presented here, due to small sample size. Study 1 presents data for all VR participants who were in foster care at their initial intake regardless of their age at the start of their most recent VR cycle. Some of these former foster care children were in their 30s, 40s, or even 50s in their most recent VR cycle, but as a group they still had a much lower rate of successful vs. unsuccessful closures than VR participants who were not in foster care at initial intake.

Table 3.19 Successful Case Closures Among ELL VR Participants

All cases among English Language Learner VR participants	ELL participants	All VR participants
	% (#)	% (#)
Open cases	48% (231)	47% (2,329)
Closed cases	52% (251)	53% (2,674)
Successful closures	17% (80)	18% (915)
Unsuccessful closures	36% (171)	35% (1,759)
Successful as % of all closures	**32%**	**35%**

Table 3.20 Successful Case Closures Among VR Participants with Mental Health Disabilities

All cases among VR participants with mental health disabilities	Participants with mental health disabilities	All VR participants
	% (#)	% (#)
Open cases	49% (211)	47% (2,329)
Closed cases	51% (221)	53% (2,674)
Successful closures	10% (44)	18% (915)
Unsuccessful closures	41% (177)	35% (1,759)
Successful as % of all closures	**20%**	**35%**

Table 3.21 Successful Case Closures Among Non-Hispanic Black VR Participants

All cases among non-Hispanic Black VR participants	Non-Hispanic Black participants	All VR participants
	% (#)	% (#)
Open cases	46% (650)	47% (2,329)
Closed cases	54% (759)	53% (2,674)
Successful closures	15% (206)	18% (915)
Unsuccessful closures	39% (553)	35% (1,759)
Successful as % of all closures	**27%**	**35%**

Table 3.22 Successful Case Closures Among VR Participants Receiving Public Assistance

All cases among VR participants receiving public assistance	Participants receiving public support	All VR participants
	% (#)	% (#)
Open cases	48% (1,278)	47% (2,329)
Closed cases	55% (1,578)	53% (2,674)
Successful closures	15% (426)	18% (915)
Unsuccessful closures	40% (1,152)	35% (1,759)
Successful as % of all closures	**27%**	**35%**

Despite a lower likelihood of successful case closure among these groups, there is generally no indication that members of these groups are less likely than VR participants overall to receive the most common VR services. The one exception to this finding is that participants with mental health

disabilities are less likely to receive job seeking and job placement services—which are particularly associated with successful closure.

Overall, these findings suggest that while members of vulnerable groups receive much the same VR services as participants overall, their demographic and socioeconomic risk factors may predispose them to a lower likelihood of successful case closure.

DETAILED FINDINGS FROM STAFF FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

OCFS/NYSCB has a statewide outreach plan in place, which is currently part of the Combined State Plan. The goal of the outreach plan is to promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB programs and services for individuals in New York State who are blind. Activities in the written plan include data analysis, community engagement, tailored outreach, digital and social media presence, direct outreach to eye care providers, and multilingual, accessible marketing.

Current Practices to Reach Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

OCFS/NYSCB staff who participated in a focus group noted that current OCFS/NYSCB outreach practices are limited in general, and particularly so for underserved groups. They voiced a need for additional resources and staff support to successfully implement the outreach activities detailed in the Combined State Plan.

When describing current outreach practices, some staff reported that they attend community events such as health fairs, coordinate with accessibility services on college campuses, and submit posts for social media to OCFS/NYSCB. They also reported that in some areas of the state, there are strong partnerships at the local level with agencies such as independent living centers and local departments of social services. Staff indicated that these local efforts tend not to focus specifically on marginalized and/or underserved groups.

Barriers to Reaching Historically Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

Per communication from OCFS/NYSCB, each office is responsible for local outreach efforts. Offices have access to brochures and FAQ documents/informational handouts about OCFS/NYSCB services, fact sheets, forms, and accessible documents.[39] However, focus group participants indicated that they are challenged by insufficient resources for outreach, including limited staff time and staff capacity. For instance, they noted that there is only one person in the home office tasked with outreach for the entire state.

Scarce marketing resources were mentioned as a factor currently limiting outreach potential. Focus group participants also explained that the OCFS/NYSCB is constrained by purchasing policies that limit their media presence.

Focus group participants said they did not know whether current outreach practices are impactful, because there is no evaluation of such practices. Noting that the OCFS/NYSCB is not well known, they said it is unclear which activities are effective at raising awareness about OCFS/NYSCB services or for reaching potential participants:

[39] RSA regulations state that all promotional items are required to be for educational purposes.

"I can't tell you how many new participants I've worked with that are just like, 'I never knew this existed. Why didn't my doctor tell me this when I was going through all my vision loss.' We're like a well-kept secret."

Marginalized and/or Underserved Subgroups

When asked to react to the list of historically marginalized populations (i.e., racial and ethnic minorities, English language learners, individuals with mental health disabilities, individuals receiving public assistance, and vulnerable youth) provided by OCFS/NYSCB, the staff indicated that in their experience, individuals with **mental health disabilities, English language learners, and members of certain ethnic and cultural groups** are difficult to reach and thus are likely underserved. The participants further noted that underserved populations may vary by region and catchment area.

Other groups mentioned by staff as potentially underserved by OCFS/NYSCB are **individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, individuals in rural areas,** and **deaf-blind individuals**.

Barriers to Reaching and Serving Historically Marginalized and Underserved Groups

Focus group participants were asked about potential reasons why specific historically marginalized groups may be difficult to reach and/or serve effectively. They reported that staff may have a limited understanding of how to best serve these populations, and thus may need additional training, for instance, in working with participants who have mental health disabilities.

Focus group conversations also highlighted a lack of knowledge about translation resources and outreach materials in different languages, which could affect the OCFS/NYSCB's ability to reach English language learners. Staff noted this as a potential **limitation** with communities, and that many English language learners with VR needs may be unaware of the services available. In addition, they perceived that some may be hesitant to engage with a state agency due to fear of deportation.

Focus group participants also suggested that, due to structural racism and marginalization, racial and ethnic minority groups may distrust providers. They specifically mentioned Native American and Hasidic Jewish people as groups who are difficult to reach and serve and indicated that staff may need training in how to provide culturally responsive services to these groups.

Staff noted complexities regarding outreach to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. OCFS/NYSCB leadership indicated that they are working with the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to coordinate these efforts. They also reported that individuals in rural areas may be underserved due to a lack of awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services, transportation barriers, and/or a perception that there are no employment opportunities for individuals with impaired vision.

"There have been times when folks have not been able to go to work or can't seek employment because of the transportation barrier. They have to walk about a mile just to get to a local public bus to get to work, so it's harder for them."

Describing difficulties reaching the deaf-blind community, one staff member mentioned that many VR providers have negative assumptions about the ability to serve these individuals. The lack of interpreters and different communication methods for this population is a significant barrier, as multiple outreach approaches are required to reach deaf-blind individuals. A staff member highlighted

the diversity within this community, underscoring the need for a thoughtful approach to both outreach and services:

> *"The deaf-blind community is very small but very challenged…. There are many different ways to become a member of this community [such as being deaf first, being born fully blind and losing hearing later, being born both deaf and blind]. There's no one solution for this community, because there's so much diversity and variation within the community and how they got there and where they're coming from."*

Suggested Outreach Strategies

Build relationships with other agencies and organizations

OCFS/NYSCB staff suggested building or deepening relationships with ophthalmologists (including pediatric ophthalmologists), departments of social services, the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, schools, mental health clinics, civic associations, and agencies serving the deaf-blind community (such as interpreter agencies and the Helen Keller National Center). They noted the importance of learning the landscape of partner agencies and continuing to strengthen ongoing relationships that will lead to referrals for people who can use VR services.

Increase staff awareness about accessible documentation

OCFS/NYSCB forms and documentation for people with visual impairments are fully accessible and available in different languages to reach more communities. However, some focus group participants were unaware and expressed a need for accessible documentation in multiple languages. This indicates a need to raise staff awareness about available resources and where to find them.

Provide ongoing professional development to staff about the needs of people with disabilities, including the needs of underserved populations

Focus group participants indicated an interest in additional training about how to best serve clients who are blind, including those who are members of unserved and historically marginalized groups. Per communication from OCFS/NYSCB, training is currently provided for supervisors, in addition to onboarding training for new staff to facilitate skills needed to serve individuals who are legally blind.

Convene the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Board to review and provide input on the outreach plan

Focus group participants recommended obtaining input from individuals who are legally blind and represent marginalized and/or underserved communities on outreach activities and compensating these individuals for their time and input. Per OCFS/NYSCB, the existing OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Board includes people who are legally blind, and these participants are reimbursed for meals, hotel, and travel.

Focus group participants indicated that individuals with lived experience can provide valuable input about how best to reach those who are in need of VR services, and particularly those who are members of underserved groups:

"I think that we need for individuals of these marginalized communities to tell us what's missing, and to tell us why something or a space may not be as safe. And then I think we have to listen and try to work toward making changes to how we do our work."

Study 4: Survey of OCFS/NYSCB District Offices on Successful Closures

This study presents a qualitative analysis of a survey designed to gather OCFS/NYSCB district staff perspectives on successful case closures in the VR program.

Evaluation Questions:

- What do staff perceive as the factors contributing to successful case closures?
- What are the barriers to successful case closure?
- How do staff characterize participant engagement with other supports and services, and how does this impact successful case closure?
- What types of collaboration are occurring with other rehabilitative providers in the state? What factors affect the collaboration?

KEY FINDINGS

Factors Contributing to Successful Case Closures

- A majority of survey respondents reported that VR services such as vision rehabilitation therapy, orientation and mobility, social casework, and job seeking assistance are all important for successful case closure.
- Respondents reported an array of additional factors relevant to participant success. These factors were often beyond the staff's control and included supportive relationships, access to transportation, stable housing, and work experience.
- Regarding participant engagement, respondents noted the importance of participants' self-motivation and active participation in the VR process as being important for success.

Barriers to Successful Case Closures

When it came to barriers to success, respondents noted the presence of medical issues and/or multiple disabilities as preventing successful case closure. Additionally, respondents indicated that a lack of transportation and participants' fear of losing SSI benefits were often barriers to a successful case closure, among other factors.

Collaboration with Other Rehabilitative Providers

- Respondents reported collaborating and coordinating their work with OCFS/NYSCB contract agencies, other community rehabilitation providers, and/or private agencies, as well as with colleges and universities.
- To improve collaboration, respondents recommended that OCFS/NYSCB engage in more local outreach to educate other providers about services offered by OCFS/NYSCB. They also suggested inviting providers and staff from other state agencies to meet with VRCs and present their own services.

Interest in Additional Professional Development

- Respondents suggested that additional staff training and professional development in certain areas is warranted to support successful case closure. Key training topics included working with individuals from specific communities, such as those with developmental disabilities, mental health issues, trauma, and marginalized or underserved identities.

SAMPLE AND STUDY DESIGN

A survey was distributed electronically via SurveyMonkey to fifty-eight staff at seven district offices. Responses were collected from October 3–18, 2024. Staff received reminders from both A&O and OCFS/NYSCB staff to complete the survey.

A total of 41 staff consented and participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 71%. Over half (51%) of the respondents were vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs), and two-thirds (66%) have worked in their current position for three or more years. Just over half (51%) work in the Upstate (Albany, Syracuse, or Buffalo) district offices, and nearly a quarter (24%) have a visual impairment or blindness. All respondent characteristics are summarized in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Description of Survey Respondents (*n* = 41)

Staff title	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC)	21	51%
District manager	7	17%
Senior counselor	6	15%
VRC – transition counselor	3	7%
Regional coordinator	2	5%
Other (O&M, CVRT)	2	5%
District office		
Upstate (Albany, Syracuse, or Buffalo offices)	21	51%
NYC (Harlem or Manhattan offices)	10	24%
Suburban NYC (Westchester or Garden City offices)	10	24%
Years in current position		
0–2 years	14	34%
3–5 years	7	17%
6–10 years	7	17%
More than 10 years	13	32%
Person with vision impairment or blindness		
Yes	10	24%
No	31	76%

DETAILED FINDINGS

Caseloads

Seventy-four percent of VRCs reported a caseload size ranging from 41 to 80 cases. Only one VRC indicated that they had a smaller caseload (21–40 cases), and five VRCs had larger caseloads (81 cases or more). District managers and other staff carry smaller caseloads relative to VRCs: seven of fourteen non-VRC staff (or 50%) reported having 20 cases or fewer.

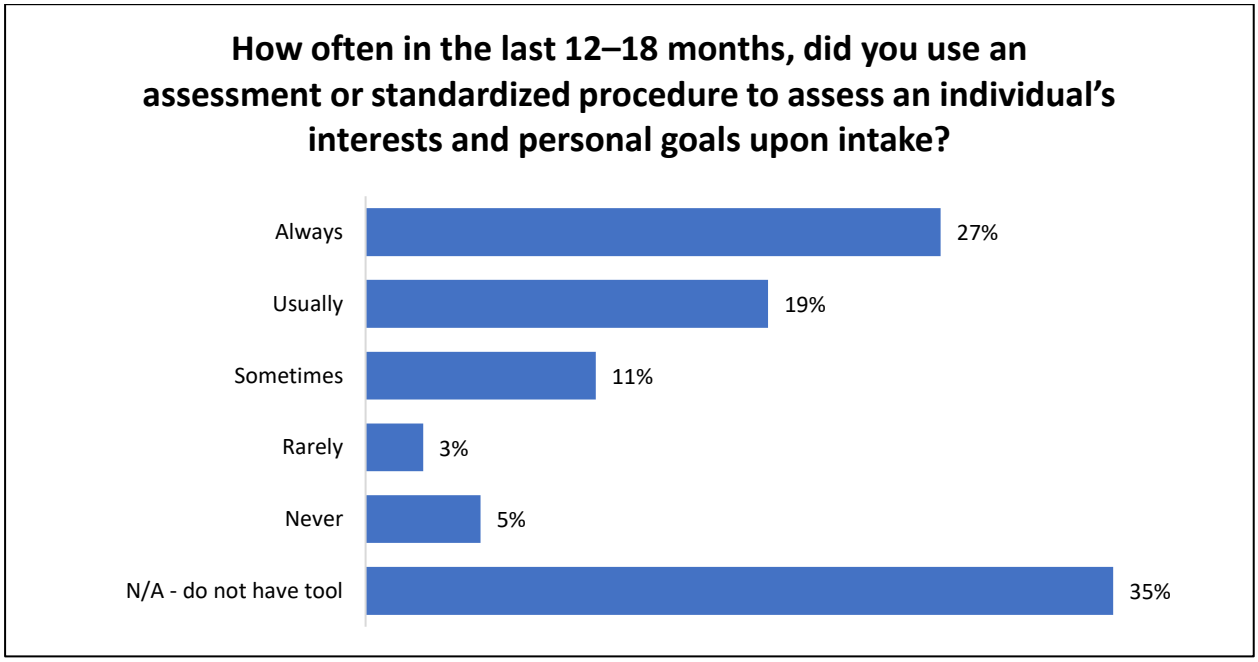
Table 4.2 Average Caseload for the Past 12 Months (*n* = 37)

Caseload	VRC (*n* = 23)	Other staff (*n* = 14)
1–20 cases	0%	50%
21–40 cases	4%	7%
41–60 cases	39%	36%
61–80 cases	35%	0%
81–100 cases	13%	7%
More than 100 cases	9%	0%

Staff Assessment Practices

Most survey respondents (65%) indicated that they have an assessment instrument or standardized procedure or process to assess participants' interests and personal goals upon intake. However, only ten (27%) of those with an identified tool indicated that they always use it. Seven (19%) said they usually use a tool or standardized process; four (11%) sometimes do; one (3%) rarely uses a tool; and two (5%) reported that they have a tool but never use it at intake. Figure 4.1 details these results.

Figure 4.1 Staff Use of an Assessment Instrument or Standardized Processes



Nearly all staff (95%) reported that they revisit and review an individual's interests and personal goals and update their plan at some point throughout their case. The frequency with which staff revisit and review an individual's interests and goals varies widely. Thirteen of thirty-seven respondents (35%) reported that they review goals annually, twelve (32%) review goals quarterly, and four (11%) review goals biannually. Seven respondents who selected "other" specified that they review participants' interests and goals as often as needed. One respondent noted that the frequency with which participants need to have their interests and goals reviewed "varies tremendously" from person to person.

Factors Influencing Successful Case Closures

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the successful cases they closed in the last twelve to eighteen months and to identify common experiences or individual characteristics that facilitated success. Twenty-six respondents answered this question.

The factors perceived to be most important for successful case closures were supportive relationships and stable transportation and housing. Comments included the following:

> *"Family support, transportation and stable living conditions facilitated success to work for my participants. Participants who live far from public transportation have great barriers to get to work particularly if they have no other support or family to assist."*
>
> *"If people have stable housing and some supportive relationships [then they] are more likely to reach successful closure."*

Eight staff made comments about the importance of work history and training programs. For instance:

> *"I think the best factor in successful case closure is work exposure. Many of my clients have been hired out of work experiences or other work exposure programs."*

Respondents also noted the importance of participants' self-motivation and active participation in the VR process, as well as good communication between the participant, the VRC, and the workplace. Additionally, staff commented that clients need to be flexible and willing to "trust the process, however long it may take."

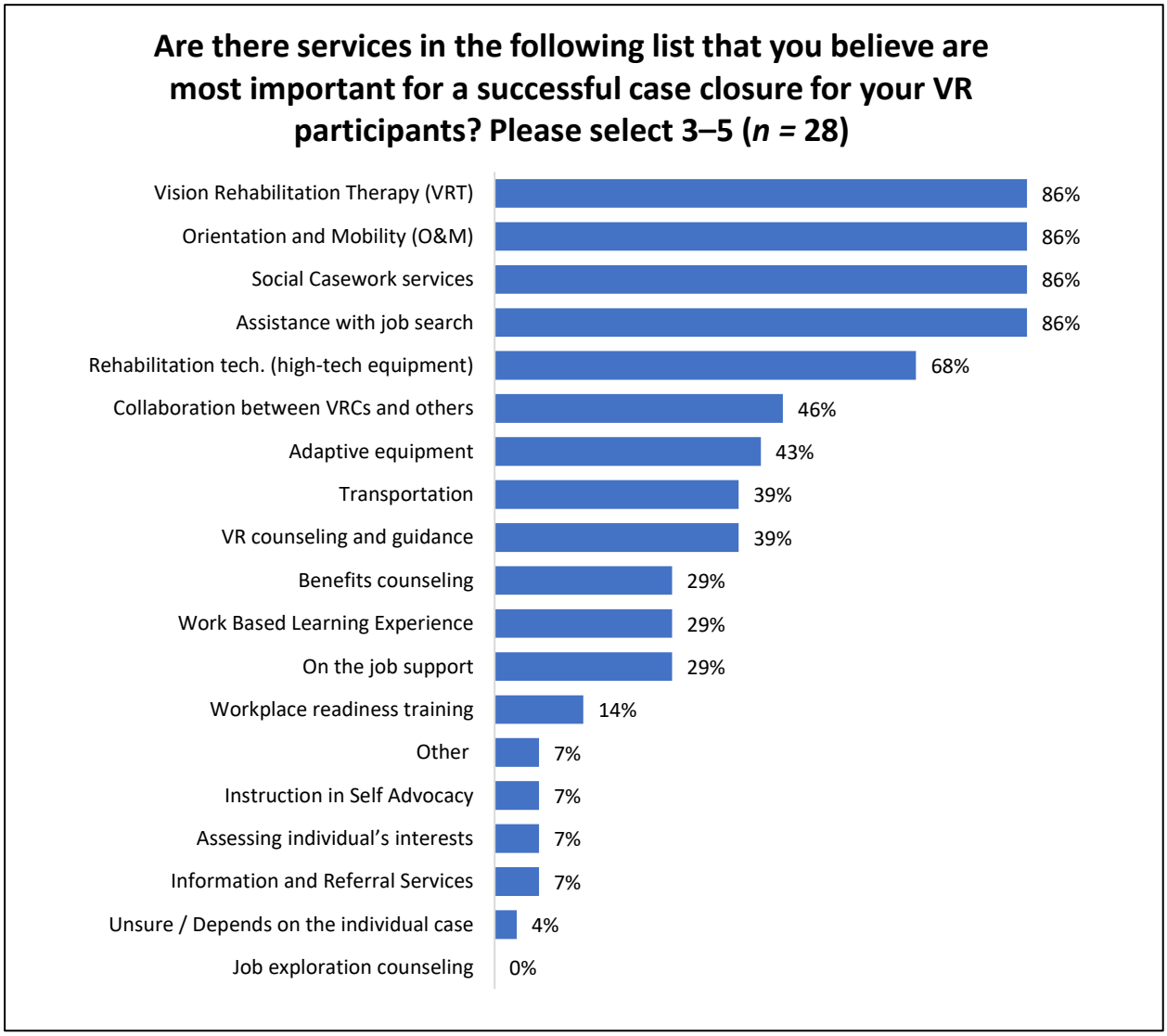
VR Services Considered Important for Successful Case Closure

Respondents were asked to indicate the three to five services that are most important for successful case closure. Eighty-six percent (24) of survey respondents indicated that vision rehabilitation therapy (VRT), orientation and mobility (O&M), social casework services, and assistance with job seeking (i.e., resume preparation, interview preparation, finding potential opportunities, transition counselor) are all important services for successful case closure.

Job exploration counseling is the only service that nobody ranked as one of the most important services for successful case closure. However, one person who selected "other" commented that a combination of assessing individual interests and job exploration is most important for pre-employment.

All responses are summarized in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Perceptions of Services Important for Successful Case Closure



Many staff provided comments about why particular services are important for case closure:

> *"VRT, O&M, and SCW services give participants the independence required for work readiness. Adaptive equipment is essential for independence. Technology and high-tech equipment are essential for a productive and independent job seeking in addition to being necessary on most all jobs. VR counseling and guidance is the cornerstone of all we do and is an essential service."*

> *"Being able to provide participants with real work experiences has been a very important aspect of successful job placement. The earlier the exposure, the better outcomes."*

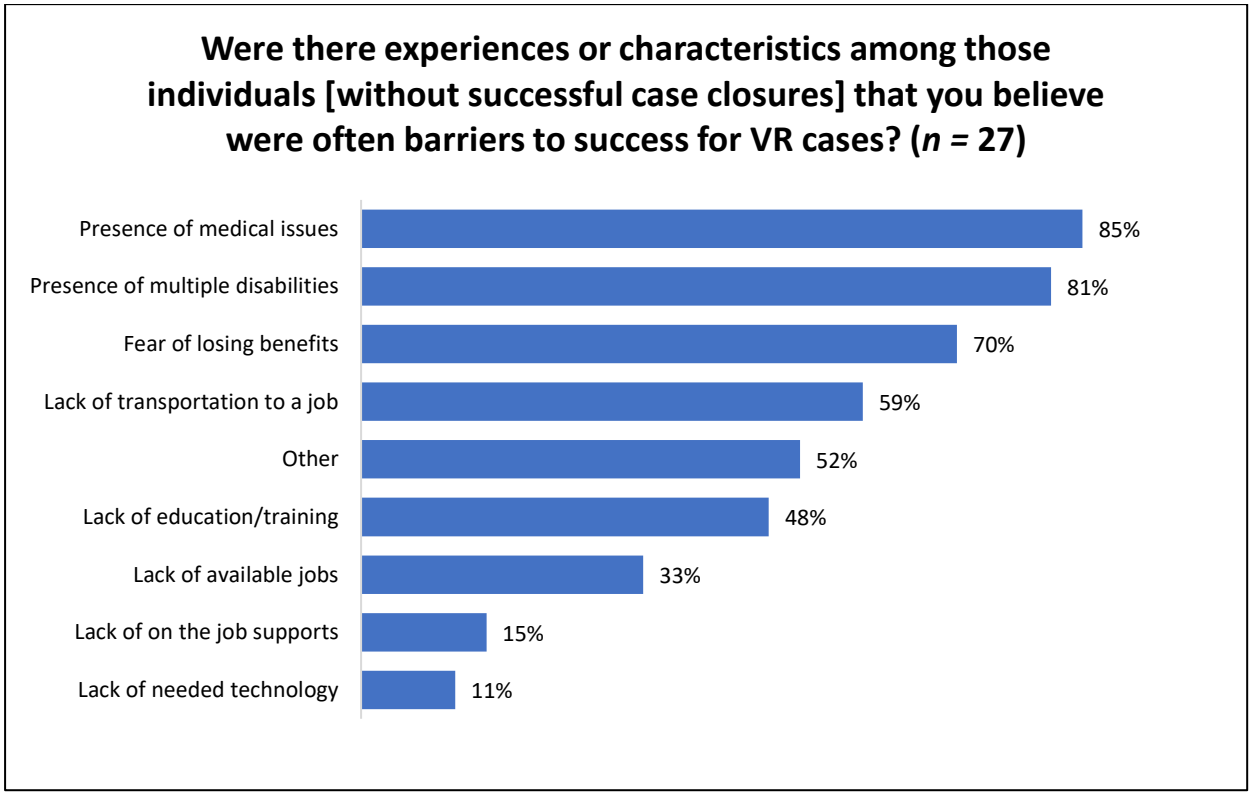
Barriers to Successful Case Closure

Respondents were asked about barriers to successful case closure based on their experience in the past twelve to eighteen months[40]. **The factors selected most often as barriers to successful case**

[40]OCFS/NYSCB leadership noted that although staff were asked about barriers in the survey, most participants with OCFS/NYSCB have multiple barriers and do still achieve successful employment. Many of the barriers participants start with are addressed through services.

closure were "presence of medical issues" and "presence of multiple disabilities." Results are summarized in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Characteristics as Perceived Barriers



Several respondents mentioned the significance of participants' health issues in their comments:

> *"[The lack of other medical conditions] is most important for a successful closure because if the participant has other health/mental issues it will interfere with their ability to seek the independence and focus on their vocational goals."*
>
> *"Our participants have multiple medical issues, including, but not limited to, alcohol and substance abuse, other physical issues such as dialysis treatments, stroke and seizures."*

Seventy percent of survey respondents cited "fear of losing benefits" as a barrier, with comments such as the following:

> *"Returning to work after being on SSI benefits is a huge change for participants. The fear and risk involved can be overwhelming. The longer someone has been out of work and on SSI the harder it [is] for them."*
>
> *"They are fearful of going back to work and jeopardizing their Social Security benefits. In addition to losing or having their monthly benefits decreased, their rent may significantly increase and the loss of SNAP benefits contribute to some individuals changing their mind about going to work. This is a major impact on their quality of life. If their rent increases too much and if they lose their SNAP benefits, the salary they receive may not be enough to meet their monthly expenses."*

Other barriers include lack of transportation (cited by 16 or 59% of respondents), education/training (13 or 48%), available jobs (9 or 33%), on-the-job supports (4 or 15%), and needed technology (3 or

11%). One person commented that only people who participate "in college training can access extensive assistive technology training and equipment," noting that too many people do not qualify for OCFS/NYSCB's assistive technology services.

Fourteen respondents (52%) selected "other" factors as barriers to successful case closure, and these reasons varied widely. Four people attributed case closure difficulties to individual characteristics such as low self-confidence, lack of motivation, or an unwillingness to engage with their VRC.

Three people noted that parents often do things for their children or may be hesitant to allow them to participate in certain activities due to their disability. Other factors that were cited as barriers included unstable housing, poor technology skills, and a need for more support. Several respondents commented on workforce shortages impacting vision professionals, and how this has sometimes been a barrier to closing cases:

> *"It is very important that participants are able to get to training and work…. Unfortunately, we also have a shortage of staffing with regard to orientation and mobility training, social caseworkers, assistive technology trainers..."*

Services for Transition Age Youth

Eleven respondents provided services for transition age youth (ages 14-22) in the past year and were asked about their coordination of services. Ten (10) of 11 respondents (91%) who serve transition age youth reported that they obtain a copy of a student's IEP or 504 plan for *most* or *some* participants. One participant indicated requesting a copy of the IEP/504 plan for all participants, but that it is rarely provided.

Two (2) respondents (18%) reported that they *usually* attend IEP or 504 plan meetings. Seven (7) respondents (64%) *sometimes* attend such meetings, while two (2) respondents (18%) *rarely* attend these meetings. Most staff serving transition age youth coordinate their work with other agencies. All respondents reported coordinating with OCFS/NYSCB contract agencies, and 7 of 11 (64%) coordinate with summer employment programs.

Staff Training Needs

Respondents were asked if additional training or professional development is needed to support successful case closures. A majority of respondents believe additional training is needed on five of the seven topics presented in the survey. Respondents from Downstate (NYC and suburban NYC) were more likely than Upstate respondents to indicate that training was needed in every area. Results are summarized in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Percent of Staff Indicating That Training Is Needed, by Topic

Topic for further training	Upstate staff (*n* = 14–16)	Downstate staff (*n* = 9–12)	All respondents (*n* = 23–28)
Working with individuals with developmental disabilities	64%	100%	79%
Working with individuals from marginalized or potentially underserved populations	69%	75%	71%
Supporting individuals for computer use or other technology skills	64%	70%	67%

Working with individuals with other disabilities	53%	70%	64%
Assessing individual's interests and personal goals	50%	56%	52%
Working with individuals who are legally blind	36%	80%	50%
Braille	29%	70%	46%

The training topic selected most often by staff was "working with individuals with developmental disabilities," with 79% of respondents overall and 100% of Downstate respondents indicating that training on this topic would support successful case closures. One person commented that they would like additional training in "mental and health services and developmental disabilities" and that it would be helpful to have training through OPWDD and OMH.

Around half of respondents indicated that training on "working with individuals who are legally blind" and "Braille" is needed. On this question there were substantial differences between Downstate and Upstate staff; whereas most Downstate respondents said more training is needed on these topics, relatively few Upstate respondents agreed. **Seventy-one percent of respondents believe training in "working with individuals from marginalized or potentially underserved populations" is needed**. The survey specified that these populations may include "racial/ethnic minorities, English language learners, mental health disabilities, eligible for public assistance, vulnerable youth including those experiencing foster care, homelessness, incarceration." One respondent commented that it is especially important for training to focus on "working with participants with mental health disabilities [and] adults with a history of trauma." Another respondent commented:

> *"I think training in working with individuals who have experienced trauma is very important. Many individuals have lost their vision through random or domestic violence or sudden trauma that has resulted in legal blindness. We need to be sure they have addressed the resulting layers of mental health."*

Other areas for additional training that were written in by respondents included ableism; trainings led by blind/visually impaired professionals in the field; topics relevant to the development of [VRCs'] vocational counseling and guidance skills; and autonomy. One person wrote, "It would benefit us to have access to standardized interest tools, academic measurements to be able to better counsel vocationally."

Only two respondents made comments indicating that more training may not be needed for all staff. One said that training needs "depend on the counselor," while the other commented, "There seems to be a shortage of professionals working in the area of blind rehab [and] not necessarily a need to train the current staff."

Coordination of Services

Respondents were asked about the frequency with which they coordinate their work with outside agencies. All respondents coordinate their work with OCFS/NYSCB contract agencies at least some of the time, and nearly all coordinate with community rehabilitation providers and/or private agencies, as well as with colleges and universities. Most respondents indicate that they "rarely" coordinate with the NYS Office of Mental Health, the Department of Social Services, and the Social Security Administration. Results are summarized in figure 4.4 below, with table 4.4 showing the frequency with which respondents coordinate with each type of entity.

Figure 4.4 Frequency of Coordination

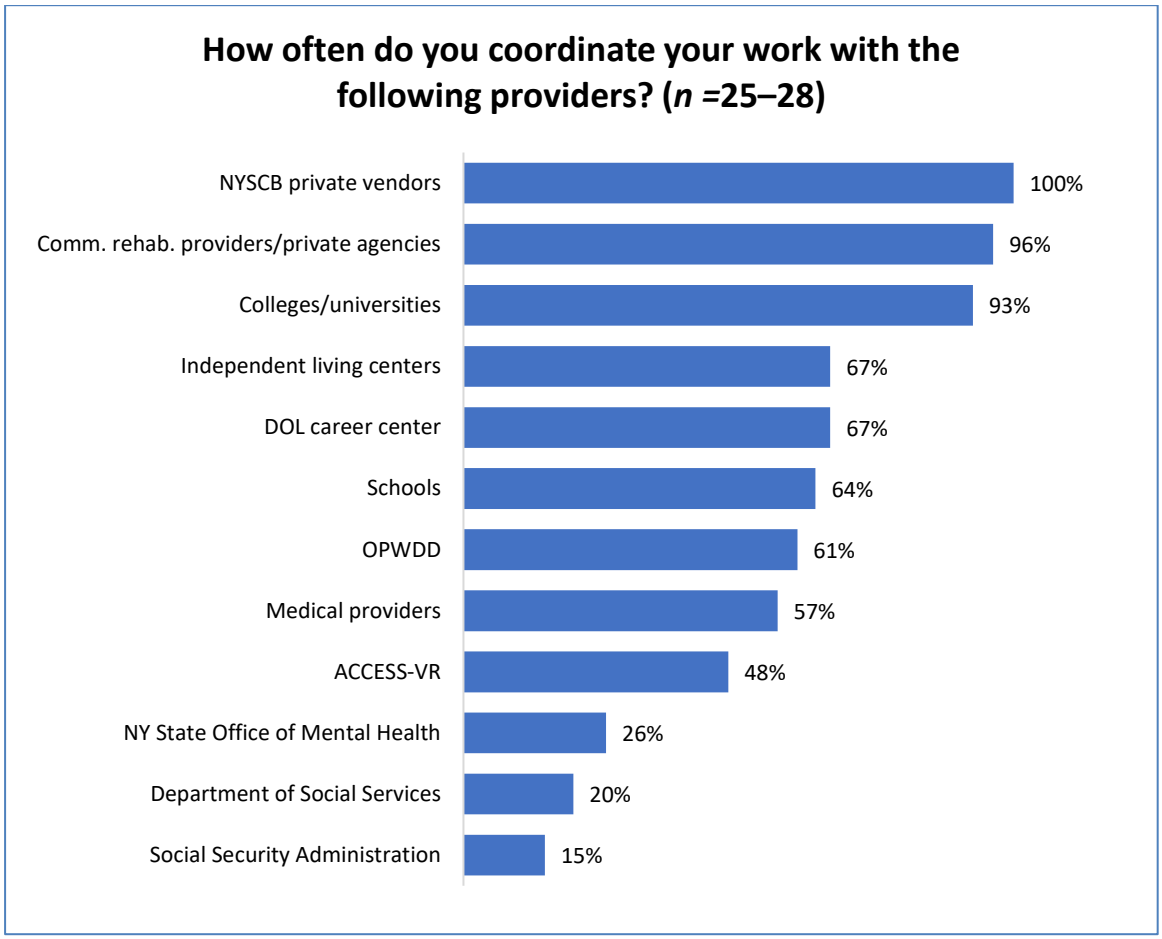


Table 4.4 Frequency with Which Providers Collaborate with Agencies (*n* = 25–28)

Agencies	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not relevant for my caseload
OCFS/NYSCB private vendors	70%	30%	0%	0%
Comm. rehab. providers/private agencies	78%	19%	4%	0%
Colleges/universities	41%	52%	4%	4%
Independent living centers	11%	56%	30%	4%
DOL career center	15%	52%	22%	11%
Schools	28%	36%	12%	24%
OPWDD	4%	57%	32%	7%
Medical providers	21%	36%	36%	7%
ACCESS-VR	0%	48%	37%	15%
NY State Office of Mental Health	0%	26%	56%	19%
Department of Social Services	0%	20%	68%	12%
Social Security Administration	4%	11%	78%	7%

When asked how the OCFS/NYSCB might improve collaborations to facilitate more successful case closures, **respondents suggested that the OCFS/NYSCB do more outreach to educate other**

rehabilitation providers about its services. Staff noted that many providers are not aware of OCFS/NYSCB services, with comments such as the following:

> *"Providing more opportunities for OCFS/NYSCB staff to complete some business engagement opportunities; workshops; career fairs; and connecting participants with the DOL and ILCs within their local communities to also receive assistance."*
>
> *"Outreach to inform these agencies of OCFS/NYSCB's services would be beneficial, along with dispelling myths/misperceptions about blindness, people who are blind, and their capabilities."*

Several respondents commented on the need to have more consistent communication and meetings with other service providers in the community. They suggested inviting colleagues such as Department of Labor staff to present to VRCs so that connections can be made and fostered.

One additional suggestion was to communicate with community rehabilitation providers when OCFS/NYSCB has the lead on cases.

Suggestions to Support Successful Case Closures

In the final survey question, respondents were given the opportunity to write in "suggestions or ideas for additional resources that you believe would facilitate your work and support successful case closure." General suggestions included the following:

- Improve the case management system so staff can spend more time on coordination and less on administrative tasks (4 comments).
- Engage in more outreach (i.e., to local employers, eye care providers, communities unfamiliar with OCFS/NYSCB services) (3 comments).
- Provide additional training for VRCs (3 comments).
- Make sure that vendor agencies provide services in a timely manner (2 comments).
- Address participants' transportation needs (i.e., by providing more transition support from training to employment) (2 comments).
- Train VRCs to understand how SSI benefits are affected by participants returning to work.
- Provide self-advocacy training and support groups to encourage participants and families to take a more active role in communicating with employers about their needs.
- Increase the number of service providers to reduce wait times.
- Provide more information and transparency to make it easier for participants and the public to understand and access the VR process.

Limitations

The findings above may not represent the perspectives of all district office staff, as the response rate for some questions was low. Of the forty-one staff who consented and began the survey, only twenty-five completed the whole survey.

Additionally, there was a lower response rate from Downstate staff, which means the above findings may be less representative of the NYC and suburban NYC district offices, and more closely representative of perspectives Upstate.

Study 5: Fiscal Forecasting for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Coordination for Transition Services

This study begins with a quantitative analysis of the VR case management system data to assess the amount of reserved funds necessary for ensuring Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to all students aged 14–21 (up to the 22nd birthday), who may need them. A qualitative analysis follows, examining OCFS/NYSCB staff coordination and collaboration with schools and others to provide transition services for these students.

Evaluation Questions:

- How many students ages 14–21 are currently engaged within the OCFS/NYSCB system?
- What is the estimated number of potentially eligible students (ages 14–21) who are legally blind who are not engaged in the OCFS/NYSCB system?
- What is the approximate funding needed to deliver Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students, as well as the amount of funding needed for other authorized services?
- To what extent are the services provided coordinated with transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or 504 plans?

KEY FINDINGS

Eligibility and Fiscal Forecasting

- There were 629 students ages 14–21 active in the OCFS/NYSCB VR system from October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023.
- An estimated 1,405 students in New York State between the ages of 14 and 21 were potentially eligible for OCFS/NYSCB services. This estimate was extrapolated from publicly available data sources, though it may be higher than actual numbers of eligible students, as data available include visually impaired individuals in addition to legally blind individuals; OCFS/NYSCB serves legally blind students only.[41] Of the 1,405 potentially eligible students, up to or as many as 776 were not served by OCFS/NYSCB during the October 2022 to September 2023 time period.
- The total funding needed to serve an estimated 1,405 eligible students for Pre-ETS and other authorized services during the twelve-month period could be up to $8,144,490. This is $4,498,308 more than the actual expenditure of $3,646,182.

Coordination of Transition Services

- OCFS/NYSCB transition services are provided by transition counselors and are coordinated with IDEA services based on student needs, individual school districts, and other factors.
- Teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) play a critical role in service coordination. TVIs help transition counselors develop relationships with students and support ongoing

[41] This estimate was extrapolated from American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota statistics on legally blind students working below the college level in 2023; American Community Survey data on students with visual impairments working below the college level were used to estimate how many students in APH data were ages 14–21 in 2023.OCFS/NYSCB serves legally blind individuals only; “legally blind” is a subset of “visually impaired,” and there are no statewide figures available encompassing only legally blind individuals. Therefore, this estimate may be higher than the actual number of individuals potentially eligible for NYSCB.

communication between them. TVIs are also viewed as an important source of information about student needs and progress and often share important information, such as Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting dates.

- Transition counselors typically are not involved in drafting students' IEPs. However, most transition counselors report requesting copies of IEPs for at least some students.
- Transition counselors highlighted barriers to effective coordination of OCFS/NYSCB transition services with transition services under IDEA/504 plans, including poor communication with schools and time constraints. They also indicated a need to promote careers in teaching people with visual impairments, as well as orientation and mobility.

SAMPLE AND STUDY DESIGN

This study's quantitative analysis included 629 participants ages 14–21. Twenty percent were receiving VR services other than Pre-ETS, but not Pre-ETS. The other 80% were receiving Pre-ETS services, and in some cases they also were receiving other VR services. The study analyzed data on services received at any point between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023.[42] Not all of these participants received Pre-ETS services; some (20%) were receiving other VR services but not Pre-ETS. The characteristics of this sample are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Study 5 Participant Characteristics

Participant characteristics	All (*n* = 629)
Sex	
Male	52%
Female	48%
Age at VR intake (median)	14
Race/ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic white	49%
Non-Hispanic Black	18%
Hispanic/Latino – any race	19%
Asian	6.4%
Multiracial/other race	5.7%
Did not identify race	2.1%
Location	
New York City	36%
Rest of state	64%
Disability characteristics	
Secondary disability	5.8%
Most significant disabilities	22%

Quantitative analysis addressed this study's first three evaluation questions through descriptive statistics—including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations—drawing on New York population data and RSA911 reports. Please see appendix A for more detailed methodology.

[42] There were 98 participants agesd14–21 who were not listed as students in the data system during this period but were receiving Pre-ETS services during this period; they were included in the analysis.

To address the fourth evaluation question of this study, A&O convened a focus group with OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors (*n* = 4). Additionally, three questions about transition service coordination were included in the Study 4 survey of all OCFS/NYSCB staff.

DETAILED RESULTS

Estimated Funding Needed to Serve Potentially Eligible Students

An estimated 1,405 students [43] between the ages of 14 and 21 are potentially eligible for OCFS/NYSCB services. Of this total, 776 (55%) are not currently served by OCFS/NYSCB (table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Estimated Eligible Students (Ages 14–21)

Eligible students	Number of students	Percent of potentially eligible students
	#	%
Estimated number of potentially eligible students	1405	100%
Number active in the OCFS/NYSCB VR system	629	45%
Estimated number eligible but not active in the OCFS/NYSCB VR system [44]	776	55%

The total expenditure for Pre-ETS services during the twelve-month period was $1,596,435. With 629 students receiving these services, the average cost of Pre-ETS per student was $2,538.

Expenditures for other authorized services for eligible students aged 14–21 totaled $2,049,747. The average cost of these authorized services (that is, not Pre-ETS services) for 629 students was approximately $3,259 per student (table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Expenditures for Students Aged 14–21

	12-month expenditure	Average cost per student (ages 14–21) *n* = 629
Pre-ETS	$1,596,435	$2,538
Other authorized services	$2,049,747	$3,259
Total 12-month expenditures for students aged 14–21	**$3,646,182**	—

Based on an estimate of 776 eligible students in New York who are not currently active in the VR system, the OCFS/NYSCB would need to budget an additional $4,498,308 to cover costs for these currently unserved students. Specifically, $1,969,527 would be needed to cover Pre-ETS services, and

[43] This estimate was extrapolated from American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota statistics on legally blind students working below the college level in 2023; American Community Survey data on students with visual impairments working below the college level were used to estimate how many students in APH data were aged 14–21 in 2023.

[44] While the percent of potentially eligible youth who are active in the OCFS/NYSCB VR system appears to have declined since the 2021 needs assessment, the current observation period includes much of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. One study found that the number of public-school students who are chronically absent has nearly doubled from 2018–2019 to 2021–2022. Such absences would necessarily have impacted the outreach and engagement of legally blind students into pre-ETS services. Source: *Chronic absenteeism and disrupted learning require an all-hands-on-deck approach*. (September 2023). The White House.

another $2,528,782 would be needed for other VR services. Including the $3,646,182 currently spent on students aged 14–21, this would result in a total expenditure of $8,144,490 to cover all eligible students in the state (table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Estimated Funding Needed to Serve All Potentially Eligible Students Ages 14–21

	Estimated Amount
Additional funding needed to provide Pre-ETS to 776 eligible but not currently active students (776 x $2,538.05)	$1,969,527
Additional funding needed to provide other authorized services for 776 eligible but not currently active students (776 x $2,641.43)	$2,528,782
Total **additional** funding needed for those eligible but not active	$4,498,308
Total funding needed for all eligible (active and potential) students	$8,144,490

OCFS/NYSCB COORDINATION OF TRANSITION SERVICES

Overview of Transition Services

OCFS/NYSCB's transition services are provided by transition counselors who carry caseloads between fifty and eighty students at a time. Transition counselors assist students to develop their employment or vocational goals based on their interests and abilities and connect them with prevocational skills training and career development resources appropriate for their age group. These services are designed to assist students in achieving their employment or vocational goals, which may include college, part-time or full-time employment, working independently in the community, and/or participating in services provided by OPWDD.

Collaboration Between Transition Counselors and Teachers for the Visually Impaired

As part of IDEA accommodations, visually impaired students receive in-school instruction from teachers for the visually impaired (TVIs). OCFS/NYSCB'S transition counselors report relying on TVIs to form relationships and to facilitate ongoing communication with students. Most transition counselors report coordinating with TVIs in order to schedule meetings with the student, and TVIs in turn contact transition counselors to share information about the student, including observations about the student's progress and IEP meeting dates. Additionally, TVIs can provide assistance and/or serve as a go-between when a transition counselor encounters challenges communicating with students' families. In the words of one transition counselor who participated in a focus group:

> *"[Teachers of the visually impaired] establish a clear line of communication."*

According to focus group participants, TVIs' ongoing contact with students provides valuable information for transition counselors about students' needs. Transition counselors can follow up on insights provided by TVIs and connect directly with students about services that may be of benefit. This coordination is especially important when a student is struggling at school. Additionally, TVIs advise transition counselors on the technology that students are familiar with and identify additional

needs. In general, transition counselors can then provide appropriate resources beyond what the Department of Education offers a student:

> *"If I go through the TVI, I'm guaranteed to meet the student, and I can foster the relationship that way..."*

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

Focus group participants noted that most students served have IEPs—while just a handful have 504 plans—and that the IEP is often incorporated into a student's OCFS/NYSCB plan. Based on both focus group findings and the survey of all staff, transition counselors typically are not involved in drafting students' IEPs, but services can be coordinated on the IEP with OCFS/NYSCB as a partner. Most transition counselors (10 out of 11 respondents, or 91%) reported that they obtain a copy of a student's IEP or 504 plan for *most* or *some* participants. Two (2) respondents (18%) reported that they *usually* attend IEP or 504 plan meetings. Seven (7) respondents (64%) *sometimes* attend such meetings, while two (2) respondents (18%) *rarely* attend these meetings.

Barriers to Coordination and Collaboration

Focus group participants reported several factors that inhibit productive collaboration with schools and/or TVIs, including:

- **Communication challenges.** Transition counselors sometimes do not find out about IEP meetings in a timely manner.
- **Challenges collaborating with TVIs** who are new to their position. Transition counselors reported that newer TVIs are sometimes less familiar with critical technology and/or working with braille. Nevertheless, most transition counselors noted a desire to work closely with TVIs and for even greater collaboration.
- Some transition counselors also suggested that there are sometimes coordination challenges when requesting services specified on a student's IEP, and transition counselors also described spending an inordinate amount of time trying to obtain student report cards.
- Additionally, there appears to be a **lack of understanding of the OCFS/NYSCB and its services** among school personnel. Transition counselors said this creates a situation in which they constantly reiterate what they do.

Suggestions to Support Collaboration with Schools

Transition counselors noted that school coordination brings a critical perspective to their work in transition services, and that the OCFS/NYSCB should champion such coordination as a Commission value. Collaboration can be strengthened by improved communication with schools. Transition counselors also suggested promoting careers in teaching people who are legally blind, as well as in orientation and mobility.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This needs assessment found that many of the factors associated with successful and unsuccessful case closure reflect socioeconomic disadvantage or other types of disadvantages. Additionally, OCFS/NYSCB staff reported an array of factors that are relevant to participant success, even as they are beyond the OCFS/NYSCB's control, including whether participants have stable housing, supportive relationships, and work experience, among other factors.

The assessment also identified several key actions that the OCFS/NYSCB can take that could materially improve rates of successful case closure, including and especially for participants from marginalized or underserved groups.

SERVING HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED AND/OR UNDERSERVED GROUPS

The analysis found that Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race, English language learners, and individuals with mental health or psychological disabilities are all groups that are presently underserved by the VR program.

Staff also noted that other underserved groups may include individuals with developmental disabilities, those from certain cultural and ethnic groups (such as Native American and Hasidic Jewish people), those who are deaf-blind, and residents of rural areas.

Recommended Actions

- Raise staff awareness about the availability of accessible materials, including where to locate them on the OCFS/NYSCB website.
- Provide additional professional development opportunities to staff on working with individuals with disabilities and those from marginalized groups.
- Expand outreach efforts to engage all eligible and potentially eligible students in OCFS/NYSCB Pre-ETS services.
- Provide job seeking and/or job placement services to VR participants as appropriate, with a particular emphasis on providing those services to individuals with mental health disabilities.

SERVING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

Participants with the most significant disabilities who also have a secondary disability are a group facing considerable challenges. In general, these participants receive services at a rate comparable to VR participants overall, yet they have a lower rate of successful case closure. **Thus, those with the most significant disabilities may require more intensive services than other VR participants.**

Recommended Actions

- Conduct research to assess services most effective for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the service intensity that is most impactful.
- Convene individuals who are legally blind to provide input on services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Board are two groups inclusive of individuals who are legally blind who can be engaged.

STRENGTHENING OUTREACH

This needs assessment found that while the OCFS/NYSCB has an outreach plan in place, efforts are needed to raise staff awareness of the plan and to support the implementation of outreach activities. These efforts are important for promoting awareness of OCFS/NYSCB programs and services across New York State. Staff reported that when they engage in outreach, there is currently no follow-up evaluation of the success of those efforts; therefore, they do not know which strategies are effective at reaching eligible participants.

Recommended Actions

- Support implementation of the Statewide outreach plan through additional resources. Communicate with staff about the plan and its key activities, with the goal of reaching legally blind individuals and connecting them with OCFS/NYSCB services, including underserved groups. Include an evaluation plan to assess the impact of different outreach strategies over time. Recommended outreach strategies include:
    - Build stronger relationships with organizations serving individuals with disabilities and those serving marginalized communities.
    - Educate other providers of rehabilitative services about services offered by the OCFS/NYSCB and invite such providers and staff from other agencies to meet with VRCs and present about their own work.
    - Engage the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Board in reviewing and providing feedback on the existing outreach plan. Consider asking for regular input from those members who are legally blind, in particular from historically marginalized communities.
    - Consider how doctors' offices (general practitioners and ophthalmologists) may be an important outreach point; when individuals become visually impaired, they are often unaware that the OCFS/NYSCB can intervene with services.
    - Given that participants' fear of losing SSI or SSDI benefits frequently impedes successful case closure, outreach should proactively communicate facts about SSI or SSDI benefits eligibility and referral for benefits advisement.

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR OCFS/NYSCB STAFF

Staff indicated that more training and development are necessary and desired in certain areas and specifically to support successful case closure. Staff shared that they may need additional training for new counselors regarding how best to serve individuals with visual impairments. Additionally, staff may have a limited understanding of how best to serve individuals from marginalized groups or those with other types of disabilities. Staff may need to meet with their supervisors more often to review areas they feel need more explanation and training.[45]

Recommended Actions

Consider additional professional development opportunities for staff on the following topics:

- Services for individuals who are legally blind and who have other types of disabilities, including developmental disabilities and/or mental health issues.
- Culturally appropriate services for individuals from marginalized communities.
- Working with individuals who have experienced trauma.
- Supporting participants to improve their computer skills and use of other technologies.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSIS

[45] The OCFS/NYSCB central office has clarified that staff who are certified rehabilitation counselors are also provided with continuing education credits as part of their professional growth and development.

This needs assessment did not include direct input from participants, representing a significant gap in the analysis. Speaking directly to service recipients is essential to understanding their needs and ensuring services are relevant, accessible, and aligned with their lived experiences. Without this input, the assessment may lack key insights into how programs impact those they are intended to serve.

Additionally, the analysis was constrained by the data recorded within the OCFS/NYSCB's CIS. Of note, the data used for this needs assessment is from a previous case management system. OCFS/NYSCB has since transitioned to a new case management system, which may allow for additional analytic options in the future.

For the current needs assessment, key participant information was not recorded and thus unavailable, including:

- Dosage (i.e., amount, intensity) of services received;
- Measure of function or *employability* of participants (i.e., job readiness skills and assets); and
- Participation in many services that are provided by OCFS/NYSCB staff, which do not require authorization.

Beyond these data limitations, the assessment is based on a snapshot of each participant's VR participation during a 36-month period. This approach may not fully capture long-term outcomes, particularly for individuals who have engaged in multiple cycles of VR services. Those receiving support for extended periods may achieve different results that are not reflected within the timeframe of this analysis.

While the findings highlight correlations between participant characteristics, services received, and employment outcomes, it is important to note that causal relationships cannot be inferred. Without additional data and a more comprehensive longitudinal approach, it remains unclear whether observed patterns are attributable to the services provided or influenced by other external factors.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSIS

- Include methods for gathering direct feedback from participants.
- Consider use of an assessment tool to gauge *employability* (i.e., critical skills and assets for employment) upon intake (pre) and again upon discharge (post).
- Provide access to data on service dosage (i.e., amount/intensity).
- Assure consistent assessment and documentation of social determinants of health or known barriers to success (i.e., housing challenges, transportation challenges).
- Gather data on other services participants receive from selected vendors.

APPENDIX: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Apter & O'Connor (A&O) designed and implemented a total of five studies within the parameters and requirements specified by the OCFS/NYSCB. Together, these studies comprise the comprehensive OCFS/NYSCB needs assessment. This section details the methodology for each study component.

STUDY 1: SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF OCFS/NYSCB CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DATASET

A&O conducted a quantitative analysis of the OCFS/NYSCB VR case management system (CMS) data to assess factors related to successful case closures for OCFS/NYSCB participants, such as demographic

factors, secondary disabilities, and the combination(s) of services received. A&O also analyzed the cost effectiveness of supported employment and postsecondary education services.

Data [46] for these analyses come from the quarterly RSA 911 reports from the final quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2023, for a full three years of data. Participants may have entered and/or exited VR services at any point during this period. Some participants have more than one "cycle" of services captured in full or in part during this three-year period.

Analysis of Successful Case Closure

To determine variables that best predict success [47] for OCFS/NYSCB participants, we used cross-tabular analysis to evaluate the relative strength of bivariate relationships between case closure status and each of several potential predictor variables that are available in the case management system (CMS) dataset. The choice of potential predictor variables was informed by previous findings and feedback from OCFS/NYSCB stakeholders. The following variables were used to determine the factors that are associated with successful case closure: demographics, disabilities (including secondary disabilities), services received, participation in supported employment, and postsecondary education.

To assess whether differences in the rate of successful closures by participant characteristics were statistically significant between groups, univariate logistic regression models were used for significance testing. In the logistic regression analyses, when a participant characteristic has more than two categories, one must be selected as the reference group to which the other categories are compared. In Study 1 and other studies that included logistic regression analyses, we used the largest category as the reference category.

Statistical significance [48] is identified in tables and graphs by the number of asterisks, with more asterisks reflecting lower probability that the observed difference occurred due to random chance (also known as a p-value). Throughout the needs assessment, p-values are coded as follows:

> ***** Indicates a p-value of <=0.05 and >0.01, meaning that there is between a 1% and a 5% chance that the observed difference occurred randomly.
>
> ****** Indicates a p-value of <=0.01 and >0.001, meaning there is between a 1% chance and a 0.1% chance that the observed difference occurred randomly.
>
> ******* Indicates a p-value of <=0.001, meaning there is less than a 0.01% chance that the observed difference occurred randomly.

[46] The analyses for Study 1 focus only on each participant's most recent cycle of services, and the data were aggregated to reflect information across all quarters in each participant's most recent VR cycle. The analysis was limited to cycles that had at least four quarters of data in the three-year observation period *or* were completely contained (i.e. both opened and closed) within the three-year observation period.

[47] To designate each VR cycle as successful or unsuccessful, the case management system (CMS) VR status was used. Per the NYSCB, the following exit codes are considered "unsuccessful" or "successful" case closures: Unsuccessful: exit code 3 or 4. Successful: exit code 6.

[48] Statistical significance should not be understood to reflect the size of a difference between groups; rather, statistical significance reflects the unlikelihood that a given difference would be found in the absence of a real relationship (i.e., occurring due to random chance). A very small difference can sometimes be statistically significant (especially if a sample size is large), and a very large difference is sometimes not statistically significant (usually due to a small sample size).

Items without asterisks are not statistically significant (i.e., there is greater than a 5% chance that the observed difference is due to random factors).

Analysis of Cost Effectiveness

To analyze the cost effectiveness of supported employment and postsecondary education services, we calculated the average cost per participant and the success rate (number of successful case closures / total number of participants) for each service. Specifically, A&O took the following steps:

1. Identified the *number of unique participants served.*[49]
2. Calculated a *total three-year expenditure*, defined as the total sum of funds expended by OCFS/NYSCB for this service for all participants from the fourth quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2023.
3. Divided the total three-year expenditures[50] by the unique participants served to calculate the *cost per participant served*.
4. Identified the number of *successful closures per service.*[51]
5. Calculated the *expenditures per successful closure* for each service type.

STUDY 2: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

A&O performed descriptive statistics on the subgroup of individuals served who have the most significant disabilities.[52] This descriptive analysis addressed:

- the number of participants served who have the most significant disabilities,
- the number of participants with each specific type of disability,
- demographics of those with the most significant disabilities (i.e., race, ethnicity, age, gender, etc.), and
- the presence of secondary disabilities.

The descriptive analysis highlighted the following information regarding this subgroup of participants who have the most significant disabilities:

- the number of successful case closures,

[49] This is a count of how many unique individuals received the service at any time from the fourth quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2023. There was no restriction on how long individuals were served during this period. Participants who may have received the service during more than one VR cycle in the period are only counted once.

[50] This reflects programmatic expenditures over a limited period and does not reflect average client-level spending. Many clients received services that began before or ended after the period observed, and so only a portion of the spending on them as individuals may have been captured during this period.

[51] There were no restrictions applied as to how long the client was served during this period or whether it was their most recent VR cycle during the period. Many participants participated in more than one VR cycle during this period, and thus it was possible for participants to have had more than one cycle closed during this period; in this case both closures would be counted if they received the service during both cycles.

[52] The OCFS/NYSCB defines "individuals with the most significant disabilities" as individuals who have serious limitations in three or more functional capacities (i.e., communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, motor skills/dexterity coordination, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance). To receive supported employment, individuals must meet these criteria for most significant disabilities.

- the number of unsuccessful case closures,
- the number of open cases, and
- services provided.

Data for these analyses were contained in the RSA 911 reports from the final quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2023, for a full three years of data.[53]

Descriptive Analysis of Participants with Most Significant Disabilities

There were 861 unique participants defined as having the most significant disabilities. Of these participants, 431 had closed cases and were observed for a sufficient period [54] to include in an analysis of predictors of successful case closure.

Descriptive statistics were provided on the population of VR participants with the most significant disabilities. To give the reader a frame of reference, they were compared to the VR population overall, but no statistical significance testing was performed.

Analysis of Successful Case Closure Among Participants with Most Significant Disabilities

A&O then analyzed predictors of successful case closure among these participants. The percentage of closures that were successful versus unsuccessful were computed by various participant characteristics. To assess whether differences in the rate of successful closures were statistically significant between groups, univariate logistic regression models were used for significance testing.

STUDY 3: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM.

A&O conducted a mixed-methods analysis to identify the needs of individuals who have been historically marginalized and unserved/underserved, based on available data. These groups included racial and ethnic minority groups; English language learners (ELL); individuals with mental health disabilities; individuals receiving public assistance (i.e., SSI/SSDI, TANF, SNAP, HUD assistance); and vulnerable youth, including youth experiencing homelessness, those involved in the juvenile justice system, and youth in foster care.

Quantitative Analysis

First, A&O performed descriptive statistics on the subgroups listed above to identify and detail the demographics and services currently provided. We documented the following for each group in which there was sufficient data:

- Demographics (i.e., race, ethnicity, age, gender, etc.);
- Socioeconomic risk factors;
- Disability types;

[53] Participants may have entered and/or left VR services at any point during this time period; some participants have more than one "cycle" of services captured in full or in part during this three-year period. The analyses focus only on the participant's most recent cycle of services and the data were aggregated to reflect information across all quarters in each participant's most recent VR cycle. The analysis was limited to cycles that had at least four quarters of data in the three-year observation period or were completely contained (i.e. both opened and closed) within the three-year observation period.

[54] Most recent VR cycle included at least four quarters of data, or most recent VR cycle was completely encompassed within the observation period.

- The specific services currently received; and
- The number of successful, unsuccessful, and open cases.

We then compared the representation of each subgroup in the VR program to estimates of that group's representation in the state population of individuals with visual impairments overall, using American Community Survey data.

Qualitative Analysis

In September 2024, A&O conducted key informant interviews and focus groups with OCFS/NYSCB staff and other professionals, based on a list provided by OCFS/NYSCB staff. These individuals were included based on their knowledge and experience with outreach, or their subject matter expertise regarding engagement with one or more of the historically marginalized groups.

Nine individuals participated in interviews or focus groups, as detailed below:

- Two focus groups were conducted with OCFS/NYSCB staff representing different roles (i.e., VR counselor, district manager, etc.) who work in various regions throughout New York State (*n* = 7).
- Two individual interviews were conducted with individuals identified based on their expertise regarding outreach and engagement with youth and deaf-blind individuals (*n* = 2).

A&O developed an interview and focus group protocol in consultation with OCFS/NYSCB staff that was designed to address current outreach practices in place to reach historically marginalized groups; barriers to effectively reaching, engaging, and retaining individuals from these groups in services; and strategies and best practices to enhance outreach and to effectively engage and serve individuals from these groups.

All interviews and focus group sessions were conducted virtually (by Zoom) and recorded for notetaking purposes. The A&O team analyzed transcripts and identified themes from all sessions, and themes were reviewed and confirmed by multiple staff.

STUDY 4: SURVEY OF OCFS/NYSCB DISTRICT OFFICES ON SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES

A&O conducted an electronic survey of all OCFS/NYSCB personnel (fifty-eight staff members across seven district offices) to gather staff perspectives on observed trends in successful participant closures. The 508-compliant electronic survey included closed- and open-ended items designed to assess staff perspectives on observed trends regarding successful case closures.

Topics included staff perspectives on the impact of individual participant attributes (education, work history, motivation level, other disabilities); barriers (i.e., transportation issues); collaboration with external partners and other state agencies; services received; level of engagement with services; frequency of contact with key supports; benefits (how SSI/SSDI may impact decisions); level of skill and experience with adaptive equipment and software; and ability to disclose an impairment to an employer and to ask for accommodations.

Responses were collected from October 3–18, 2024. Staff received reminders from both A&O and OCFS/NYSCB staff to complete the survey. A total of forty-one staff consented and participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 71%.

A&O calculated the frequencies and percentages for all closed-ended items. We analyzed open-ended responses for emergent themes and summarized the results.

STUDY 5: FISCAL FORECASTING FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PRE-ETS) AND COORDINATION FOR TRANSITION SERVICES

A&O utilized quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a fiscal analysis and to describe coordination between transition providers and schools.

Quantitative Analysis

A&O conducted an analysis of OCFS/NYSCB system data to forecast the amount of reserved funds necessary for ensuring Pre-ETS are available to all potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities (aged 14–21, up until their 22nd birthday) who may need them.

As a first step, A&O estimated the number of students who are legally blind and are currently engaged within the OCFS/NYSCB system, and the number of potentially eligible students who are not currently engaged. To determine the number currently served, A&O consulted the federal RSA 911 for unique active participants. We estimated the number of potentially eligible students using publicly available data. Specifically, this estimate was extrapolated from American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota statistics on legally blind students working below the college level in 2023. American Community Survey data on students with visual impairments working below the college level were used to estimate how many students in the APH data were ages 14–21 in 2023.

A&O then calculated the cost of OCFS/NYSCB services, based on expenditures indicated in the RSA 911 reports. These costs are limited to billed services, mostly obtained by purchase. We determined the amount of funds necessary to make Pre-ETS available Statewide to all potentially eligible and eligible students who are legally blind between the ages of 14 and 21 (up until their 22nd birthday) and showed funds remaining to provide additional authorized activities.

Qualitative Analysis

A&O convened a focus group with OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors (*n* = 4) to obtain perspectives on the extent to which OCFS/NYSCB services provided to youth, ages 14–21, are coordinated with transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 504 plans. A&O developed a focus group protocol, in collaboration with OCFS/NYSCB staff. The focus group protocol included questions and probes about coordination and collaboration with schools around transition services to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, including perspectives on what is working well with coordination, as well as what can be improved. The focus group was conducted virtually (by Zoom) and recorded for notetaking purposes. The A&O team analyzed transcripts and identified themes from all sessions, and themes were reviewed and confirmed by multiple staff.

C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES.

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

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

Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—

Support innovation and expansion activities;

Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;

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); and

Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

[text box: List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority]

OCFS/NYSCB updated the goals and priorities developed for the 2026 Combined State Plan Modification. These goals and priorities were developed using feedback from OCFS/NYSCB workgroups, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from OCFS/NYSCB open forums, the results of the Statewide Needs Assessment and OCFS/NYSCB administrative priorities. RSA conducted onsite monitoring in April 2018 OCFS/NYSCB was able to close their corrective action in October 2024.

These goals and priorities for PYs 2026 and 2027 have been developed using feedback from OCFS/NYSCB workgroups, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from OCFS/NYSCB open forums, the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Executive Board and OCFS/NYSCB administrative priorities.

Goal 1: Improve and expand participant services.

Strategies

1. Develop additional vocational training programs that meet the needs of participants and businesses.
2. Continue to foster and expand the current working relationships with OPWDD and OMH on both the local and state level.
3. Improve participant access to ESL training programs, literacy and the High School Equivalency (HSE) test prep programs and educational services.
4. Utilize information gathered during the Quality Assurance process to identify regionally-specific needs and increase activities in those areas to support participant outcomes and collaboration between OCFS/NYSCB and partner providers.
5. Improve participant access to Braille training programs across the state.

Goal 2: Monitor cases closed in Competitive Integrated Employment for one year after closure and work to increase baseline performance measures, including retention with employer during second and fourth quarters after exit quarter by 1% each PY.

Strategies

1. Increase collaborative efforts with community rehabilitation providers in regard to business development efforts, increase partnerships, face-to-face contacts and regional relationships with businesses to increase their awareness of the skills and abilities of individuals who are blind and the services provided by OCFS/NYSCB.
2. Expand partnerships with America's Job Centers in addition to the other core partners; NYSDOL, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services- Adult Education and NYSED/ACCES-VR, to increase access to services needed by OCFS/NYSCB participants.
3. Support and promote the modernization of the Business Enterprise Program in order to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.
4. Work with National Industries for the Blind to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities in the Service sector.

Goal 3: Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout NYS.

Strategies

1. Continue to promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services to the populations identified as underserved in the Statewide Needs Assessment.
2. Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services through participation in a variety of community events including job fairs and outreach activities; through social media exposure; through direct outreach to eye care providers; and through distribution of marketing materials in multiple language and formats to a wide variety of entities.

Goal 4: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality services to participants.

Strategies

1. Encourage staff to attend supervision and management training in connection with the delivery of services. Each office will continue to expand outreach efforts.
2. Continue employee orientation programming in all regional offices to include training on visual impairment, blindness and low vision. In 2024, OCFS/NYSCB onboarded multiple new staff and supported their transition through weekly training sessions covering case management systems, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), performance measures, Supported Employment Services, Vision Rehabilitation and Orientation and Mobility Services, Children and Transition Services, the Business Enterprise Program, outreach activities, and the Adaptive Living Program. These trainings may be repeated as needed to support future onboarding.
3. Increase the regional workforce development conducted at a regional, district office level, including promoting OCFS/NYSCB with community businesses and working with providers of employment services. OCFS/NYSCB is represented on the State Workforce Investment Board as of 2024.
4. Expand services and increase awareness of services available to individuals who are deaf-blind by encouraging staff to participate in training, events and programs offered by the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative. OCFS/NYSCB is represented on the Interagency Council for the Deaf.

OCFS/NYSCB has not identified any impediments to the achievement of these goals and priorities.

Provision of Assistive Technology Services and Devices

OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through ATC contracts and through private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing participants for success in educational or training settings and employment. AT Centers, as well as a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers, provide onsite needs evaluation and training for individuals who are unable to travel to a center or whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

OCFS/NYSCB has begun to survey documentation submitted at the end of the Readiness Assessment and the AT Assessment and Training to determine whether AT Centers are conducting assessments and services in accordance with the *Assistive Technology Center Standards Manual*.

A list of approved private vendors is posted on the OCFS/NYSCB website.

Two OCFS/NYSCB loan closets also provide Statewide access to loaner equipment while a participant is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for educational or training purposes or employment.

In addition, OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program to enable them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standard.

Outreach Services

OCFS/NYSCB has developed contract guidelines for a new Outreach/Case Finding component that establishes a reimbursable outcome for outreach to underserved communities. Specific criteria were developed that needed to be met in order for the agency to receive funding and referring an individual for OCFS/NYSCB services. The goal of this new service is to promote the availability of VR services to New Yorkers who are legally blind who are not yet known to OCFS/NYSCB. One hundred and twenty six individuals met the criteria for case finding during PY24 and a portion of PY 2025 . These individuals were not previously known to OCFS/NYSCB and after submitting an application, were found eligible for VR services.

Working with Community Rehabilitation Programs

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new prevocational, preemployment transition services and vocational training programs for both adults and transition-age youth. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a participant to reach their vocational goal. OCFS/NYSCB also conducts both quality assurance and curriculum reviews so that existing programs continue to provide quality programming that prepares participants to enter the workforce.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of prevocational programs for youth ages 10-13. OCFS/NYSCB is also focused on increasing pre-employment transition services for youth ages 14-23.

OCFS/NYSCB conducts meetings with directors of rehabilitation and agency administrators throughout its service regions to discuss quality of service delivery and new programming needs on a regular basis.

OCFS/NYSCB and community provider staff continues to meet annually at the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment.

Working with the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

1. Efforts to connect with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's Job Centers and to participate in Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) serve multiple purposes: connecting OCFS/NYSCB to businesses, promoting knowledge about OCFS/NYSCB and its services, and connecting job seekers to services at the job centers which may lead to more competitive outcomes. OCFS/NYSCB will work with the core State Plan partners to implement the WIOA related strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan.

2. Participation by OCFS/NYSCB staff in Chapter 515 meetings allows discussions among OCFS/NYSCB, NYSED/ACCES-VR, OPWDD, and OMH about the challenges facing mutual participants including minorities and individuals who are deaf-blind and those in more isolated communities. The group works to achieve more effective transition from pre-employment programs to employment, identify barriers to participation in employment and distribute services to achieve access. In planning and coordinating activities, including training, the group will help staff to increase skills needed to help participants achieve integrated employment while increasing knowledge and access to each other's services.

3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Centers, DRCs and other qualified resources, OCFS/NYSCB anticipates that more participants will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB has signed a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH Administrative Employment Network (AEN). This will increase opportunities for participants to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. OCFS/NYSCB works with NYSED/ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to individuals with most significant disabilities seeking those services.

Achieving Goals and Priorities Consistent with the Comprehensive Needs Assessment

OCFS/NYSCB developed strategies and goals based on recommendations and findings from the recently conducted Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). OCFS/NYSCB will continue to engage with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's Job Centers, especially in rural areas. Rural participants may need to overcome transportation and location issues and when possible, using these sites for meetings and job leads, a local perspective can be provided and additional support generated for a participant to achieve an employment outcome.

The CSNA also identified an underserved participant group as those with English as a Second Language (ESL). A goal of OCFS/NYSCB has been identified as increasing and improving participant access to ESL training programs. Marketing will continue to include the provision of marketing materials in multiple languages as well as be distributed through a variety of community events.

As identified in the CSNA, OCFS/NYSCB has included goals and strategies to increase vocational and job skills training, also taking into account labor market trends and growing fields with higher rates of employment needs.

Overcoming Barriers to Access and Participation in Vocational Rehabilitation

Several of the strategies identified in the Combined State Plan are geared toward overcoming barriers to equitable access to and participation in VR and supported employment services including strategies to develop additional training programs, improve access to English as a Second Language training programs, the expansion of pre—vocational services for youth and to increase the awareness of services among minority populations by providing information in different languages.

Performance Accountability Measures

Many of the strategies identified in this Combined State Plan align with the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. In particular, the strategies associated with improving employment outcomes, preparing youth for employment, and engaging the business community will support improving performance on the performance accountability measures. OCFS/NYSCB continues to increase the reporting and data collection for Measurable Skills Gains a documented in the Appendix 2: Performance Goals for the Core Programs.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds

OCFS/NYSCB will continue to support the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council's initiatives and meetings. The Council meets four times annually and Innovation and Expansion funds are used to support the meetings and their efforts and initiatives.

OCFS/NYSCB used innovation and expansion funds during PY 2022 and 2023 to support participants in pre-employment transition skills programs at the Visions Rehabilitation Center in NYS and anticipates to continue to use Innovation and Expansion funds for this program in PYs 2022 and 2023. The programs are run by VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The 4-week summer Pre-ETS program focuses on helping students begin to identify their occupational interests and develop the skills to reach their goals. The 15-week program is designed to provide vocational skills training combined with work readiness skills to prepare our youth for the world of work. The program has expanded to include additional certification programs, work-based learning experiences and a summer session in addition to fall and spring. Students are enrolled in either Rockland County BOCES certificate programs or Rockland County Community College certificate programs. Vocational training program options for certification include Administrative Professional, Certified Nursing Assistant, IT Support Professional and Bookkeeping in addition to many other options. OCFS/NYSCB had thirty-two students participate in the programs.

OCFS/NYSCB expanded residential services during PY 22, Innovations and Expansion funds will continue to be used to support the residential contracts during PYs 23 and 24. These services support participants with the most significant disabilities and service needs. OCFS/NYSCB created and developed a request for proposals available to all residential programming opportunities for participants who are blind across the nation. Based on the responses, OCFS/NYSCB was able to establish relationships and develop residential contracts for thirteen programs across the country. OCFS/NYSCB recognized the need for residential services programs for participants who are legally blind. Residential programming provides more intensive, integrated services for participants that

need more individualized attention and structure to make progress towards their goals of employment and independence.

OCFS/NYSCB updated the Supported Employment goals and priorities developed for the 2024 Combined State Plan. These goals and priorities were developed using feedback from OCFS/NYSCB workgroups, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from OCFS/NYSCB open forums, the results of the Statewide Needs Assessment and NYSC administrative priorities.

Goal 1: Improve and expand participant services

1. Develop additional vocational training programs that meet the needs of participants and businesses.

   OCFS/NYSCB updates the training required to become a licensed BEP manager to keep up with industry standards and changes in technology. Training focuses on practical application of materials learned and also incorporates Chicago Lighthouse BEP Licensee Training offering online curriculum meant to maximize hands-on practice. All Comprehensive Service Contractors approved to provide the service of Vocational Skills Training were required to submit new curricula for the programs they would provide under the service and were approved by senior management prior to implementation.

2. Continue to foster and expand the current working relationships with OPWDD and OMH on both the local and state level.

   OCFS/NYSCB staff continues to build relationships with community rehabilitation providers and partner state agencies to increase referrals for supported employment (SE) services. OCFS/NYSCB staff received SE training and discussed the importance of OPWDD and OMH in the provision of services. As part of that initiative, OCFS/NYSCB reached out and presented on OCFS/NYSCB and vision loss to many of the general Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). OPWDD in particular has been an ongoing partner and presented to the children's counselors and transition counselors on OPWDD services including vocational services and eligibility.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to be represented on the MISCC (Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council). Opportunities for interaction continue during ongoing meetings. OCFS/NYSCB actively participates in Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). The MISCC was established by Chapter 551 of the Laws of 2202. The MISCC is responsible for ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages with physical, intellectual, developmental, and mental disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their individual needs. The council is currently lead by the NYS Chief Disability Office (CDO)and OCFS/NYSCB is also active on the MISCC employment sub-committee. The employment sub-committee is currently in the process of developing goals but will be continuing the work of the Employment First Commission.

3. Improve participant access to English as a Second Language training programs, literacy and the high school equivalency test prep programs and educational services.

   OCFS/NYSCB will continue to support the State Rehabilitation Councils advocacy efforts for a fully accessible High School equivalency exam for blind state residents.

Goal 2: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using PY 2024 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

1. Increase collaborative efforts with community rehabilitation providers in regard to business development efforts, increase partnerships and regional relationships with businesses to increase their awareness of the skills and abilities of individuals who are blind, and the services provided by OCFS/NYSCB.

   OCFS/NYSCB has representation on the 10 local workforce business engagement teams across NYS. While there was a delay in meetings, OCFS/NYSCB is poised to regroup and work with local business and state partners to meet the needs of business as the state pivots out of the pandemic. OCFS/NYSCB staff also have access at the local office level to NYSDOL's One Stop Operating System (OSOS) to enter business engagement information as well as gather the most up to date information on a business that may be being served by another WIOA partner. All business engagement data in NYS is being gathered in the one system.

   During PY 2025, OCFS/NYSCB Quality Assurance team will continue to conduct agency reviews for CSC, ATC and Placement services contracts. The OCFS/NYSCB QA team will continue to review in-person service provision as well as any services being provided virtually. Participant satisfaction surveys will continue to be conducted.

2. Continue to work with the National Employment Team (NET) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and other employment networks to improve employment options for OCFS/NYSCB participants.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to have contact and gather business leads from the National Employment Team through CSAVR. This connection puts OCFS/NYSCB in direct contact with businesses interested in working with VR and allows those connections to then be shared at a regional level to access OCFS/NYSCB's talent pool.

   OCFS/NYSCB also coordinates its own placement consortium in the New York City area. This group consists of all of the placement providers as well as other vision loss community stakeholders. The group gathers every six weeks to share business leads and best practices. Businesses and community resources are also brought into each meeting to share information and help the staff and CRPs better understand opportunities for collaboration.

3. Expand partnerships with America's Job Centers as well as the four core partners (NYSDOL, NYSED, Adult Education and ACCES-VR), to increase access to services needed by OCFS/NYSCB participants.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to build bridges with each of the 96 career centers across NYS. OCFS/NYSCB developed an introduction to OCFS/NYSCB training and has shared that with staff at each center in the region. These trainings are provided by local OCFS/NYSCB staff who would then be in the region working with that center. OCFS/NYSCB now has staff sharing space and meeting participants in a number of centers and continues to be a resource for general Workforce Development staff. OCFS/NYSCB also encouraged CRPs to work directly with the local career centers through changes in the placement services contract. OCFS/NYSCB looks forward to increasing connections when the physical career centers reopen to job seekers.

4. Support and promote the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) in an effort to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.

Prior to the pandemic OCFS/NYSCB held joint staff meetings that included VR and BEP staff to work on increasing VR participant referrals to BEP as well as to increase BEP manager's hiring rate of OCFS/NYSCB VR participants seeking competitive integrated employment. The OCFS/NYSCB VR/BEP liaison group previously met via teleconference quarterly to discuss BEP processes, training program schedules, discusses concerns and provide feedback and collaboratively work to improve the BEP referral and training process.

OCFS/NYSCB continued to address issues pertaining to program expansion through active participation with the State Committee of Blind Vendors.

5. Work with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities in the Service sector.

   OCFS/NYSCB is actively working with NIB subsidiary Empire State Employment Resources for the Blind, to develop a three-year strategic plan highlighting strategy to develop Competitive Integrated Employment. We have worked with all NYSPSP affiliates on understanding Competitive Integrated Employment and the VR process.

Goal 3: Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout NYS

1. Continue to promote OCFS/NYSCB services to the populations identified as underserved in the Statewide Needs Assessment.

   OCFS/NYSCB has increased the promotion of services in underserved, rural regions by advertising in local news publication and free shopper magazines in their "For the Community" sections. Letters were sent to eye doctors and school districts in underserved and rural areas of NYS to introduce and expand knowledge of OCFS/NYSCB services.

   OCFS/NYSCB has focused on improving the direct outreach to eye providers across the state to strengthen and expand the promotion of services. Through this initiative OCFS/NYSCB has been able to increase awareness of services available to blind residents of New York State.

2. Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services through participation in a variety of community events including job fairs and outreach activities; social media exposure; direct outreach to eye care providers; and distribution of marketing materials in multiple languages and formats to a wide variety of entities.

   OCFS/NYSCB has presented at many regional agencies such as Catholic Charities of Schoharie County and a newly developed Albany White Cane Day, which occurred virtually in October 2022. Various cultural and awareness days are attended by OCFS/NYSCB staff Statewide.

   OCFS/NYSCB has representation at NYS legislative disability awareness days, and regional job fairs. OCFS/NYSCB has a representative on each of the regional Business Engagement teams across the state and regional NYSDOL job fair information is shared. District Office Managers are also on the distribution list generated by NYSDOL for job fairs occurring within their territory.

   In conjunction with the National Library Service for the Blind, OCFS/NYSCB's VR intake materials are being converted to audio cartridges and are going to be available to the public in this new widely accessible format.

Goal 4: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality service to participants

1. Encourage staff to attend supervision and management training in connection with succession planning.
   Continue new employee orientation programming in all regional offices to include training on visual impairment, blindness, and low vision.

   Increase the regional workforce development conducted at a regional, district office level, including promoting OCFS/NYSCB with community businesses and working with providers of employment services.

   Expand services and increase awareness of services available to individuals who are deaf-blind by encouraging staff to participate in training, events, and programs offered by the Dead-Blind Collaborative (DBC).

   In partnership with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), OCFS/NYSCB:

   - Attends and acts as presenters at DBC trainings, workshops and events;
   - Collaborates on OCFS/NYSCB participant cases;
   - Attends webinars;
   - Shares and observes each other's programs and curricula;
   - Cross refers participants, accessing many services from DBC and OCFS/NYSCB; and
   - Receives direct consultations and accesses information and referrals.

   DBC maintains an ongoing relationship with LaGuardia Community College (LCC) for training in deaf education.

   OCFS/NYSCB also sponsored participant and counselor training through its partnership with the DBC and LCC, working in coordination with the NYS CDO-Deaf Blind Coordinator, Christopher Woodfill.

OCFS/NYSCB evaluates progress toward the achievement of goals and priorities on an ongoing basis. OCFS/NYSCB is reporting on the goals and objectives identified in the 2022-2023 OCFS/NYSCB VR State Plan. During PYs 19 & 22, OCFS/NYSCB placed 344 and 236 individuals in competitive integrated employment respectively. The average hourly wage in PY 19 was $22.76/hour and for PY 22 $23.35/hour. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic competitive integrated employment outcomes were likely impacted.

OCFS/NYSCB was mostly successful in achieving goals and priorities set in the Combined State Plan. One area that needs continual development is Language Access. An increased demand for VR services by non-English speakers has increased awareness of the need to develop vendors and resources outside of LanguageLine Solutions®. This was also indicated as an underserved population in the recently conducted CSNA, and efforts will continue to provide better access to services by this and other identified underserved populations.

OCFS/NYSCB outcomes and services were greatly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In March of 2022 and throughout much of 2023, OCFS/NYSCB's employee base was working from home. Social distancing measures created a significant impact on the ability to gather with others. The inability to provide one-on-one direct services impacted the service provision OCFS/NYSCB and our partner providers were accustomed to. OCFS/NYSCB did issue guidance on the provision and approval of services and outcomes in a remote modality for some services, as appropriate; As

numbers and statistic on infection and vaccination rates came in remote services were modified appropriately. OCFS/NYSCB did have a decrease in competitive employment outcomes as a result of the pandemic, however the full impact on outcome and data is not fully understood. OCFS/NYSCB will work to determine the impact and implement goals and strategies in forth coming plans to work on increasing employment outcomes.

Provision of Assistive Technology Services and Devices

OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through ATC contracts and through private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. AT centers as well as a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide onsite needs evaluation and training for individuals who are unable to travel to a center or whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

Two OCFS/NYSCB loan closets also provide Statewide access to loaner equipment while a participant is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

In addition, OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program to enable them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standard.

Outreach Services

OCFS/NYSCB has developed contract guidelines for a new Outreach/Case Finding component that establishes a reimbursable outcome for outreach to underserved communities. The service component was implemented in June 2023 and continues in the re-issued 2023 Comprehensive Services Contract. Specific criteria were developed that needed to be met in order for the agency to receive funding and referring an individual for OCFS/NYSCB services. The goal of this new service is to promote the availability of VR services to New Yorkers who are legally blind who are not yet known to OCFS/NYSCB. One hundred and sixty-two individuals met the criteria for case finding during PY 2023 and a portion of PY 2024. These individuals were not previously known to OCFS/NYSCB and after submitting an application, were found eligible for VR services. This is an increase from140 cases meeting these criteria during Federal Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023.

Working With Community Rehabilitation Programs

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new prevocational and vocational training programs for both adults and transition-age youth. OCFS/NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a participant to reach his/her vocational goal. OCFS/NYSCB also conducts both quality assurance and curriculum reviews so that existing programs continue to provide quality programming that prepares participants to enter the workforce.

OCFS/NYSCB has begun to survey documentation submitted at the end of the Readiness Assessment and the AT Assessment and Training to verify that AT centers are conducting assessments and services in accordance with the *Assistive Technology Center Standards Manual*.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of prevocational programs beginning with youth at age 10 and continuing through the transition years. These programs will provide both variety and increasing complexity so that youth are well prepared for post-secondary education and training.

New placement contracts reflecting the expectations and requirements for service delivery were implemented on January 1, 2025, for a five-year period. New services were added to the contract in order to increase employer engagement and participant advancement in employment.

The new employer outcome service, which is achieved when a participant is successfully placed with an employer where an OCFS/NYSCB participant has never been placed at before. For PY 2023 and 2024, there were 15 outcomes obtained, meaning 23 participants were successfully closed at employers previously unknown to OCFS/NYSCB.

An outcome related to Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), was achieved 22 times in PYs 2023 and 2024. This outcome is achieved when a successful placement in which the participant is engaging in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) for a minimum of two months is eligible for the Substantial Gainful Activity Outcome service.

OCFS/NYSCB conducts meetings with directors of rehabilitation and agency administrators throughout its service regions to discuss quality of service delivery and new programming needs on a regular basis.

OCFS/NYSCB and community provider staff continues to meet annually at the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment, describing strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators. In 2023 the VRI was held virtually through eleven different sessions from January through June. The opportunity to provide these meetings virtually increased the attendance among OCFS/NYSCB staff and providers and provided a wider variety of topics.

Working With the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

1. Efforts to connect with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's Job Centers and to participate in Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) serve multiple purposes: connecting OCFS/NYSCB to businesses, promoting knowledge about OCFS/NYSCB and its services, and connecting job seekers to services at the job centers which may lead to more competitive outcomes. OCFS/NYSCB will work with the core State Plan partners to implement the WIOA related strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan.

2. Participation by OCFS/NYSCB staff in Chapter 515 meetings allows discussions among OCFS/NYSCB, NYSED/ACCES-VR, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) about the challenges facing mutual participants including minorities and individuals who are deaf-blind and those in more isolated communities. The group works to achieve more effective transition from pre-employment programs to employment, identify barriers to participation in employment and distribute services to achieve equitable access. In planning and coordinating activities, including training, the group will help

staff to increase skills needed to help participants achieve integrated employment while increasing knowledge and access to each other's services.

3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Centers, DRCs and other qualified resources, OCFS/NYSCB anticipates that more participants will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. OCFS/NYSCB currently has 19 vendors approved for the provision of benefits advisement services throughout NYS, three additional providers have been approved to provide this service since 2024. Providers of these services include agencies chartered primarily for provision of services to individuals who are blind, independent living centers, and other agencies that have engaged staff who are trained and certified by the Social Security Administration, by the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations, or by Virginia Commonwealth University. Many of these providers offer advisement not only on Social Security benefits, but also on a host of other benefits which may be affected by entering employment. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB has signed a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH Administrative Employment Network (AEN). This will increase opportunities for participants to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. OCFS/NYSCB works with NYSED/ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to individuals with most significant disabilities seeking those services.

VR Programs' Performance on the Performance Accountability Measures

OCFS/NYSCB moved out of baseline for one of the six Common Performance Measures under WIOA. In early 2024 OCFS/NYSCB and SED/ACCES-VR collectively negotiated the NYS Measurable Skills Gains performance rates for PY 2024 and PY 2025. OCFS/NYSCB has individually achieved the negotiated rate for MSG's for PY 2024, PY 2025 will be calculated after this plan is finalized, however OCFS/NYSCB expects to also achieve that negotiated rate.

OCFS/NYSCB has provided training, guidance documents and guidance from VRTAC-QM and WINTAC to staff and providers. OCFS/NYSCB continues to support district offices in documenting their participants achievement of MSG as well as include the required documentation in the case record.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work on Business Engagement and in PY 2023 and 2024.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to review performance measure dashboards as provided by RSA as well as the section on "other measures that matter." The additional four Common Performance Measures are identified in that section and baseline negotiations for rates on those are expected to occur as part of this plan submittal and will be updated here once this is completed. Updated negotiation rates and outcomes for PY 2024 and PY 2025 can be found in Appendix 2: Performance Goals for the Core Programs of the NYS Combined State Plan.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds in PY 2023 and 2024

OCFS/NYSCB used Innovation and Expansion funds for the following projects in PY 2023 and 2024.

OCFS/NYSCB supports the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council. The Council meets four times annually and Innovation and Expansion funds are used to support the meetings and their efforts and initiatives.

OCFS/NYSCB used innovation and expansion funds during PY 2023 and 2024 to support participants in pre-employment transition skills programs at the Visions Rehabilitation Center in NYS. The

programs are run by VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The 4-week summer Pre-ETS program focuses on helping students begin to identify their occupational interests and develop the skills to reach their goals. The 15-week program is designed to provide vocational skills training combined with work readiness skills to prepare our youth for the world of work. The program has expanded to include additional certification programs, work-based learning experiences and a summer session in addition to fall and spring. Students are enrolled in either Rockland County BOCES certificate programs or Rockland County Community College certificate programs. Vocational training program options for certification include Administrative Professional, Certified Nursing Assistant, IT Support Professional and Bookkeeping in addition to many other options. OCFS/NYSCB had thirty-two students participate in the programs.

OCFS/NYSCB expanded residential services during PY 2023. These services support participants with the most significant disabilities and service needs. OCFS/NYSCB created and developed a request for proposals available to all residential programming opportunities for participants who are blind across the nation. Based on the responses, OCFS/NYSCB was able to establish relationships and develop residential contracts for thirteen programs across the country. OCFS/NYSCB recognized the need for residential services programs for participants who are legally blind. Residential programming provides more intensive, integrated services for participants that need more individualized attention and structure to make progress towards their goals of employment and independence.

D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

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

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs; [text box: List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies]

Performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and [text box]

The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC). [text box]

Goal 1: Improve and expand participant services.

1. Develop additional vocational training programs that meet the needs of participants and businesses.

   OCFS/NYSCB updates the training required to become a licensed BEP manager to keep up with industry standards and changes in technology. Training focuses on practical application of materials learned and also incorporates Hadley BEP Licensee Training offering online curriculum meant to maximize hands-on practice. All Comprehensive Service Contractors approved to provide the service of Vocational Skills Training were required to submit new curricula for the programs they would provide under the service and were approved by senior management prior to implementation.

2. Continue to foster and expand the current working relationships with OPWDD and OMH on both the local and state level.

   OCFS/NYSCB staff continues to build relationships with community rehabilitation providers and partner state agencies to increase referrals for supported employment (SE) services. OCFS/NYSCB staff received SE training and discussed the importance of OPWDD and OMH in the provision of services. As part of that initiative, OCFS/NYSCB reached out and presented on OCFS/NYSCB and vision loss to many of the general Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). OPWDD in particular has been an ongoing partner and presented to the children's counselors and transition counselors on OPWDD services including vocational services and eligibility.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to be represented on the MISCC (Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council). Opportunities for interaction continue during ongoing meetings. OCFS/NYSCB actively participates in Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). The MISCC was established by Chapter 551 of the Laws of 2002. The MISCC is responsible for ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages with physical, intellectual, developmental, and mental disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their individual needs. The council is currently lead by OMH and OCFS/NYSCB is also active on the MISCC employment sub-committee. The employment sub-committee is currently in the process of developing goals but will be continuing the work of the Employment First Commission.

3. Improve participant access to English as a Second Language training programs, literacy and the high school equivalency test prep programs and educational services.

   OCFS/NYSCB will continue to support the State Rehabilitation Councils advocacy efforts for a fully accessible High School equivalency exam for blind state residents.

Goal 2: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using PY 2024 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

1. Increase collaborative efforts with community rehabilitation providers in regard to business development efforts, increase partnerships and regional relationships with businesses to increase their awareness of the skills and abilities of individuals who are blind, and the services provided by OCFS/NYSCB.

   OCFS/NYSCB has representation on the 10 local workforce business engagement teams across NYS. While there was a delay in meetings, OCFS/NYSCB is poised to regroup and work with local business and state partners to meet the needs of business as the state pivots out of the pandemic. OCFS/NYSCB staff also have access at the local office level to NYSDOL's One Stop Operating System (OSOS) to enter business engagement information as well as gather the most up to date information on a business that may be being served by another WIOA partner. All business engagement data in NYS is being gathered in the one system.

2. Continue to work with the National Employment Team (NET) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and other employment networks to improve employment options for OCFS/NYSCB participants.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to have contact and gather business leads from the National Employment Team through CSAVR. This connection puts OCFS/NYSCB in direct contact with

businesses interested in working with VR and allows those connections to then be shared at a regional level to access OCFS/NYSCB's talent pool.

OCFS/NYSCB also coordinates its own placement consortium in the New York City area. This group consists of all of the placement providers as well as other vision loss community stakeholders. The group gathers every six weeks to share business leads and best practices. Businesses and community resources are also brought into each meeting to share information and help the staff and CRPs better understand opportunities for collaboration.

3. Expand partnerships with America's Job Centers as well as the four core partners (NYSDOL, NYSED, Adult Education and ACCES-VR), to increase access to services needed by OCFS/NYSCB participants.

   OCFS/NYSCB continues to build bridges with each of the 96 career centers across NYS. OCFS/NYSCB developed an introduction to OCFS/NYSCB training and has shared that with staff at each center in the region. These trainings are provided by local OCFS/NYSCB staff who would then be in the region working with that center. OCFS/NYSCB now has staff sharing space and meeting participants in a number of centers and continues to be a resource for general Workforce Development staff. OCFS/NYSCB also encouraged CRPs to work directly with the local career centers through changes in the placement services contract. OCFS/NYSCB looks forward to increasing connections when the physical career centers reopen to job seekers.

4. Support and promote the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) in an effort to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.

   The OCFS/NYSCB VR/BEP liaison group previously met in person quarterly to discuss BEP processes, training program schedules, discusses concerns and provide feedback and collaboratively work to improve the BEP referral and training process.

   OCFS/NYSCB continued to address issues pertaining to program expansion through active participation with the State Committee of Blind Vendors.

5. Work with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities in the Service sector.

   OCFS/NYSCB is actively working with NIB subsidiary Empire State Employment Resources for the Blind, to develop a three-year strategic plan highlighting strategy to develop Competitive Integrated Employment.

Goal 3: Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout New York State.

1. Continue to promote OCFS/NYSCB services to the populations identified as underserved in the Statewide Needs Assessment.

   OCFS/NYSCB has increased the promotion of services in underserved, rural regions by advertising in local news publication and free shopper magazines in their "For the Community" sections. Letters were sent to eye doctors and school districts in underserved and rural areas of NYS to introduce and expand knowledge of OCFS/NYSCB services.

OCFS/NYSCB has focused on improving the direct outreach to eye providers across the state to strengthen and expand the promotion of services. Through this initiative OCFS/NYSCB has been able to increase awareness of services available to blind residents of New York State.

2. Promote awareness of OCFS/NYSCB services through participation in a variety of community events including job fairs and outreach activities; social media exposure; direct outreach to eye care providers; and distribution of marketing materials in multiple languages and formats to a wide variety of entities.

   OCFS/NYSCB has representation at NYS legislative disability awareness days, and regional job fairs. OCFS/NYSCB has a representative on each of the regional Business Engagement teams across the state and regional NYSDOL job fair information is shared. District Office Managers are also on the distribution list generated by NYSDOL for job fairs occurring within their territory.

   In conjunction with the National Library Service for the Blind, OCFS/NYSCB's VR intake materials are being converted to audio cartridges and are going to be available to the public in this new widely accessible format.

Goal 4: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality service to participants.

1. Encourage staff to attend supervision and management training in connection with succession planning.
   Continue new employee orientation programming in all regional offices to include training on visual impairment, blindness, and low vision.

   Increase the regional workforce development conducted at a regional, district office level, including promoting OCFS/NYSCB with community businesses and working with providers of employment services.

   Expand services and increase awareness of services available to individuals who are deaf-blind by encouraging staff to participate in training, events, and programs offered by the Dead-Blind Collaborative (DBC).

   In partnership with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), OCFS/NYSCB:

   - Attends and acts as presenters at DBC trainings, workshops and events;
   - Collaborates on OCFS/NYSCB participant cases;
   - Attends webinars;
   - Shares and observes each other's programs and curricula;
   - Cross refers participants, accessing many services from DBC and OCFS/NYSCB; and
   - Receives direct consultations and accesses information and referrals.

DBC maintains an ongoing relationship with LaGuardia Community College (LCC) for training in deaf education.

OCFS/NYSCB has also sponsored participant and counselor staff for training via this DBC and LCC partnership.

OCFS/NYSCB evaluates progress toward the achievement of goals and priorities on an ongoing basis. OCFS/NYSCB is reporting on the goals and objectives identified in the 2020-2024 OCFS/NYSCB

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Plan. During PYs 22 & 23, OCFS/NYSCB placed 312 and 189 individuals in competitive integrated employment respectively. The average hourly wage in PY 22 was $25.80/hour and for PY 23 $26.54/hour.

OCFS/NYSCB was mostly successful in achieving goals and priorities set in the State Plan. One area that needs continual development is Language Access. An increased demand for VR services by non-English speakers has increased awareness of the need to develop vendors and resources outside of LanguageLine Solutions®. This was also indicated as an underserved population in the recently conducted CSNA, and efforts will continue to provide better access to services by this and other identified underserved populations.

Provision of Assistive Technology Services and Devices

OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through ATC contracts and through private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. AT centers as well as a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide onsite needs evaluation and training for individuals who are unable to travel to a center or whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

Two OCFS/NYSCB loan closets also provide Statewide access to loaner equipment while a participant is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

In addition, OCFS/NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program to enable them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standard.

Outreach Services

OCFS/NYSCB has developed contract guidelines for a new Outreach/Case Finding component that establishes a reimbursable outcome for outreach to underserved communities. The service component was implemented in June 2015 and continues in the re-issued 2024-2028 Comprehensive Services Contract. Specific criteria were developed that needed to be met in order for the agency to receive funding and referring an individual for OCFS/NYSCB services. The goal of this new service is to promote the availability of VR services to New Yorkers who are legally blind who are not yet known to OCFS/NYSCB. One hundred and thirty-two individuals met the criteria for case finding during PY22 and a portion of PY 2023. These individuals were not previously known to OCFS/NYSCB and after submitting an application, were found eligible for VR services.

Working With Community Rehabilitation Programs

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new prevocational and vocational training programs for both adults and transition-age youth. OCFS/NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a participant to reach his/her vocational goal. OCFS/NYSCB also conducts both quality assurance and curriculum reviews so that existing programs continue to provide quality programming that prepares participants to enter the workforce.

OCFS/NYSCB has begun to survey documentation submitted at the end of the Readiness Assessment and the AT Assessment and Training to verify that AT centers are conducting assessments and services in accordance with the *Assistive Technology Center Standards Manual*.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of prevocational programs beginning with youth at age 10 and continuing through the transition years. These programs will provide both variety and increasing complexity so that youth are well prepared for post-secondary education and training.

New placement contracts reflecting the expectations and requirements for service delivery were implemented on January 1, 2025, for a five-year period. New services were added to the contract in order to increase employer engagement and participant advancement in employment.

An outcome related to Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), was achieved 31 times in PYs 2022 & 2023. This outcome is achieved when a successful placement in which the participant is engaging in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) for a minimum of two months is eligible for the Substantial Gainful Activity Outcome service.

OCFS/NYSCB conducts meetings with directors of rehabilitation and agency administrators throughout its service regions to discuss quality of service delivery and new programming needs on a regular basis.

OCFS/NYSCB and community provider staff continues to meet annually at the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment, describing strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators. In 2023 the VRI was held virtually through eleven different sessions from January through June. The opportunity to provide these meetings virtually increased the attendance among OCFS/NYSCB staff and providers and provided a wider variety of topics.

Working With the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

1. Efforts to connect with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's Job Centers and to participate in Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) serve multiple purposes: connecting OCFS/NYSCB to businesses, promoting knowledge about OCFS/NYSCB and its services, and connecting job seekers to services at the job centers which may lead to more competitive outcomes. OCFS/NYSCB will work with the core State Plan partners to implement the WIOA related strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan.

2. Participation by OCFS/NYSCB staff in Chapter 515 meetings allows discussions among OCFS/NYSCB, NYSED/ACCES-VR, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) about the challenges facing mutual participants including minorities and individuals who are deaf-blind and those in more isolated communities. The group works to achieve more effective transition from pre-employment programs to employment, identify barriers to participation in employment and distribute services to increase access. In planning and coordinating activities, including training, the group will help staff to increase skills needed to help participants achieve integrated employment while increasing knowledge and access to each other's services.

3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Centers, DRCs and other qualified resources, OCFS/NYSCB anticipates that more participants will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. OCFS/NYSCB currently has 19 vendors approved for the provision of benefits advisement services throughout NYS, three additional providers have been approved to provide this service since 2019. Providers of these services include agencies chartered primarily for provision of services to individuals who are blind, independent living centers, and other agencies that have engaged staff who are trained and certified by the Social Security Administration, by the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations, or by Virginia Commonwealth University. Many of these providers offer advisement not only on Social Security benefits, but also on a host of other benefits which may be affected by entering employment. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB has signed a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH Administrative Employment Network (AEN). This will increase opportunities for participants to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. OCFS/NYSCB works with NYSED/ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to individuals with most significant disabilities seeking those services.

VR Program's Performance on the Performance Accountability Measures

OCFS/NYSCB moved out of baseline for one of the six Common Performance Measures under WIOA. In early 2020 OCFS/NYSCB and SED/ACCES-VR collectively negotiated the NYS Measurable Skills Gains performance rates for PY 22 and PY 23. OCFS/NYSCB has individually achieved the negotiated rate for MSG's for PY 23, PY 24 will be calculated after this plan is finalized, however OCFS/NYSCB expects to also achieve that negotiated rate.

OCFS/NYSCB has provided training, guidance documents and guidance from VRTAC-QM and WINTAC to staff and providers. OCFS/NYSCB continues to support district offices in documenting their participants achievement of MSG as well as include the required documentation in the case record.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to work on Business Engagement and in PY 2023 & 2024.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to review performance measure dashboards as provided by RSA as well as the section on "other measures that matter." The additional four Common Performance Measures are identified in that section and baseline negotiations for rates on those are expected to occur as part of this plan submittal and will be updated here once this is completed.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds in PYs 2023 and 2024

OCFS/NYSCB used Innovation and Expansion funds for the following projects in PY 2023and 2024.

OCFS/NYSCB supports the OCFS/NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council. The Council meets four times annually and innovation and expansion funds are used to support the meetings and their efforts and initiatives.

OCFS/NYSCB used innovation and expansion funds during PY 2020 and 2021 to support participants in pre-employment transition skills programs at the Visions Rehabilitation Center in NYS. The programs are run by VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The 4-week summer Pre-ETS program focuses on helping students begin to identify their occupational interests and develop the skills to reach their goals. The 15-week program is designed to provide vocational skills training combined with work readiness skills to prepare our youth for the world of work. The program has expanded to include additional certification programs, work-based learning experiences and a

summer session in addition to fall and spring. Students are enrolled in either Rockland County BOCES certificate programs or Rockland County Community College certificate programs. Vocational training program options for certification include Administrative Professional, Certified Nursing Assistant, IT Support Professional and Bookkeeping in addition to many other options. OCFS/NYSCB had thirty-two students participate in the programs.

OCFS/NYSCB expanded residential services during PY 22. These services support participants with the most significant disabilities and service needs. OCFS/NYSCB created and developed a request for proposals available to all residential programming opportunities for participants who are blind across the nation. Based on the responses, OCFS/NYSCB was able to establish relationships and develop residential contracts for thirteen programs across the country. OCFS/NYSCB recognized the need for residential services programs for participants who are legally blind. Residential programming provides more intensive, integrated services for participants that need more individualized attention and structure to make progress towards their goals of employment and independence.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

(1) Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) [check box] VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

(B) [check box] VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

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

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

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

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

The Vocational Rehabilitation division of NYSED/ACCES–VR continues to have primary responsibility for supported employment programs and other integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in NYS. A MOU is in place covering the respective roles and responsibilities of

OCFS/NYSCB, NYSED/ACCES–VR, OPWDD, and OMH in supported employment for participants who are blind.

Since 1989, the number of community agencies utilizing Supported Employment Grant Funds under Title VI–B of the Rehabilitation Act to provide supported employment services to individuals who are blind has expanded from eight to 83. The grant awards stipulate adherence to all requirements set forth in Title VI–B of the Rehabilitation Act. Targeted populations include individuals with multiple disabilities who are aging out of educational programs, individuals in day treatment and long-term extended employment, and those who have been unable to maintain employment in integrated community settings. The "individual placement" is the prevailing model; however, this does not preclude consideration of alternatives including the "enclave" and "affirmative business." The 59 agencies are located in major cities and in suburban and rural areas across the state.

When an individual's work performance is actualized, natural supports maximized, and the services (job coaching, adjustment counseling, and advocacy) reach the lowest level necessary for the individual to maintain employment, the individual's supported employment case is closed. Extended services provide ongoing support and can be provided by a state agency, private organization, business, co–workers and family members, or any other source available to assist the individual to maintain employment. Under the Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment, OMH and OPWDD provide follow–along services for individuals who meet their respective eligibility criteria. Individuals who do not meet OMH or OPWDD criteria may receive extended services through designated NYSED/ACCES–VR funds or through natural supports in the workplace. Individuals in extended services may request post- employment services or, if necessary, ask to have their cases reopened.

Traditional VR services continue to be available to supported employment candidates using VR funds in the development as well as in the execution of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In this regard, there is no distinction from other VR participants. Quality assurance is a matter of ongoing concern. Vendors receive *Guidelines for Supported Employment* which are updated as needed and convey the expectations for quality services. NYSED/ACCES–VR quality assurance staff, with input from OCFS/NYSCB and other partners, established new case review form protocols to gather information that can be used to monitor and improve services. OCFS/NYSCB district office staff is invited to participate in reviews of agencies in their catchment area; however, they typically participate only in reviews of agencies that are serving participants who are blind.

The OCFS/NYSCB supported employment coordinator and staff regularly monitor reports and contract implementation. The coordinator regularly talks with OCFS/NYSCB district office staff, contractors, and state monitors to address progress and opportunities for program improvement, providing technical assistance and training as needed.

1. The timing of transition to extended services

Supported employment services are delivered through the NYSED/ACCES–VR contracting system, as agreed under Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992. OCFS/NYSCB transfers its supported employment funds to NYSED/ACCES–VR but retains case management responsibility for individuals in the intensive service phase. In January 2024 a new supported employment contract methodology was implemented which resulted in:

- Increased time for counselors and providers to plan together and review participant progress;
- More efficient authorization and reporting processes;
- More timely movement from referral to job placement and stabilization; and
- Increased earnings and work hours for successful supported employment participants.

The purpose of the OCFS/NYSCB's supported employment program is to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive employment in their communities. OCFS/NYSCB continues to serve all eligible individuals who need supported employment services, with a goal of placing as many individuals as possible in employment. In PY 2024, nine individuals received supported employment services. A total of six participants were successfully placed in supported competitive employment and transitioned to extended supported employment services; the average hourly wage slightly decreased from $16.22/hr. to S14.46/hr., and the average number of hours worked per week decreased from 25.2 to 19. Referrals increased from 13 to 16.

OCFS/NYSCB has four primary goals for PY 2026: the first is to increase the number of individuals placed in supported employment; the second is to maintain hourly wages to at least current minimum wage; the third is to maintain the average number of hours worked at a minimum of 24 hrs./week; and the fourth is to increase referrals. In NYS, the administrative responsibility for supported employment programs is consolidated in the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (NYSED/ACCES-VR), as established in accordance with Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992. NYSED/ACCES-VR incorporated supported employment into its new Core Rehabilitation Services Contract effective January 1, 2024. Supported employment is an outcome-based funded model. OCFS/NYSCB works cooperatively with NYSED/ACCES-VR to provide opportunities for supported employment across the state. OCFS/NYSCB staff has been trained on policy and procedure for the supported employment process.

Because blindness is a low incidence disability, OCFS/NYSCB continues to be challenged in anticipating service needs and distributing the limited funds available. The lack of extended services funds further limits the number of individuals who can enter intensive supported employment services. OCFS/NYSCB plans to work more closely with NYSED/ACCES-VR in the future to determine the distribution of funds available for intensive and extended services, while providing information and training to enable staff to better access extended services through the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) or Office of Mental Health (OMH), as appropriate.

OCFS/NYSCB does provide extended supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period not to exceed four years. OCFS/NYSCB currently works directly with OPWDD and OMH to transition to extended supported employment services prior to the 24-month limitation of supported employment intensive services.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to maintain case management, program monitoring and oversight responsibilities for the supported employment services provided to OCFS/NYSCB participants. Service providers regularly provide OCFS/NYSCB with individual participant reports, and OCFS/NYSCB staff meet regularly with providers and participants.

OCFS/NYSCB will continue to work with NYSED/ACCES-VR to assess performance on an ongoing basis, participate in on-site reviews, and provide technical assistance or recommend adjustments to contracts as needed.

OCFS/NYSCB, with NYSED/ACCES-VR, continues to take a close look at supported employment caseloads to utilize Title VI-B funds in the most effective manner to assist individuals with most significant disabilities in obtaining competitive employment.

Counselors have been instructed to:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments, including situational assessments, prior to referral for supported employment services in order to increase the likelihood that individuals referred for supported employment will benefit from it. This also allows intensive service dollars to be focused more on job development, placement and training, and should allow individuals to complete the intensive phase more quickly.
- Consider the use of natural supports following employment and start to establish eligibility for extended services at the beginning of the planning process. This will maximize the use of limited NYSED/ACCES-VR funding for extended services.

Provider agencies have been instructed to regularly review cases to determine which participants no longer require extended services due to their increased experience and confidence, and the availability of natural supports.

OCFS/NYSCB provided each office with detailed training on OCFS/NYSCB-supported employment policy and process as well as building bridges with service providers.

F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

(1) Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—

(A) VR Program; and

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)

(B) Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)

There are numerous factors that impact an individual's choice to seek vocational rehabilitation services to obtain employment. There is currently no method to accurately assess how many of the legally blind individuals in NYS would apply for OCFS/NYSCB services and be found eligible for services. According to the American Community Survey, there are 19,867,248 individuals in NYS as of July 2024. The prevalence rate of visual impairment is 2.1%, which results in an estimated 417,212 individuals reporting a visual disability. For individuals between the ages of 16 and 64, there are an estimated 227,954 individuals reporting a visual disability. Because the data includes individuals who are visually impaired and not only individuals who are legally blind, it can provide some useful information to estimate the number of individuals who would be eligible for services from OCFS/NYSCB; however, it cannot be used as a benchmark since OCFS/NYSCB only serves individuals who are legally blind. Therefore, the best estimate of the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for VR services is based on historical data as noted below.

OCFS/NYSCB provides a full range of VR services to eligible individuals. OCFS/NYSCB has evaluated data on the number of individuals who applied for services, the number of people found eligible for VR services, and the number of individuals served in the past three years. Based on this evaluation, OCFS/NYSCB estimates that 1,200 individuals will be found eligible during both PYs 2026 and 2027. OCFS/NYSCB anticipates serving 4,045 individuals in each of these PYs. Of the 4,045 individuals expected to receive services, OCFS/NYSCB expects that 4,021 individuals will be served using Title I Vocational Rehabilitation funds at a total estimated cost of $31,000,000 and an average cost of services of $7,664. OCFS/NYSCB expects that the remaining 24 individuals in each Federal Fiscal Year will be served using a state VR comparable benefits provider. Title VI, Part B Supported Employment funds are transferred to SED/ACCES-VR and are used for their participants in the supported employment program.

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an order of selection.

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

[check box] The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

[check box] The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.
* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

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

(1) For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—

(A) The justification for the order;
[text box]

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

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

(2) Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?
[check box] Yes
[check box] No

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

B. The justification for the order.

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

C. The service and outcome goals.

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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

OCFS/NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

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

OCFS/NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

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

OCFS/NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

3. All State plan requirements will apply

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

OCFS/NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

(1) Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

(A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;

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

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

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years

(D) Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients: [text box]

(E) Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years: [text box]

(2) Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:

(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for

certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

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

(B) The VR agency's plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

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

iii. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

iv. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

(3) Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including—

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

(D) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

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

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

This plan outlines strategies to update staff credentials so that all staff meet the highest academic standards for their profession.

Number of Personnel Employed

As of June 30, 2025, OCFS/NYSCB employees totaled 127 individuals, resulting in 124.8 full- time equivalent (FTE) staff in seven district offices and the home office. The fill level of OCFS/NYSCB is 135 FTE staff. Therefore, the identified vacant positions below that are identified as OCFS/NYSCB having the capacity to fill only 10 positions currently; any additional staff above 10 FTE must be met with a corresponding decrease in another area or office. OCFS/NYSCB is in the process of filling all vacant positions.

The total number of field staff was 60, with nine positions vacant. Approximately 3,300 legally blind individuals are active in the VR program at any given time. The average caseload is 68 participants per VRC.

Of the 60 senior VRC and VRCs in positions, 52 are certified rehabilitation counselors (CRC) or CRC eligible. Staff who are not certified or have elected not to upgrade their credentials will receive senior VRC sign-off prior to establishing eligibility, signing the IPE (including any amendments and the annual IPE review) and closing cases.

OCFS/NYSCB's current staffing allows OCFS/NYSCB to effectively provide services to all individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services. OCFS/NYSCB is aware that many professional staff intend to retire within the next five years. The result of personnel transactions for calendar year 2025 as they affected each district office is as follows:

- Buffalo – One Sr. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Syracuse – No vacancies
- Albany – One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors vacancy
- White Plains – One Orientation and Mobility vacancy
- Manhattan – No vacancies
- Hempstead – One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor vacancy
- Harlem – One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor vacancy

As required, OCFS/NYSCB will request any necessary approval to fill vacancies. For many years, OCFS/NYSCB had been required to seek NYS Division of the Budget approval for a waiver in order to hire any personnel. The state hiring freeze is currently suspended but may be reinstituted in the future.

Staff Five Year Projections

OCFS/NYSCB estimates that by the year 2028, 31 current VRCs and senior VRCs will be age 55 or older and eligible to retire. Many of those within retirement age, however, will not have enough time in service to retire at age 55 and will retire at a later time. In using age 55 as a likely retirement age, along with 30 years of state service, it is estimated that 26 VRCs, senior VRCs, orientation and mobility (O&M) Instructors and VRTs will retire from OCFS/NYSCB in the next five years, as shown in the table below. All VRCs and senior VRCs expected to remain will be CRC or CRC eligible.

Using the same formula, it is estimated that three of the five O&M instructors and vision rehabilitation therapists (VRTs) will retire or leave for other reasons. All vacancies in the O&M and VRT disciplines are expected to be replaced.

Row	Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies Over the Next Five Years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	60	0	18
2	Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	12	0	5
3	O&M Instructor	7	1	2
4	Vision Rehabilitation Therapist	5	0	1

OCFS/NYSCB maintains contact with the three colleges and universities in the state that prepare VRCs as a source for staff positions. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB continues to work closely with the colleges to develop a process for the recruitment of students from diverse populations and to establish a curriculum based on best practices, research, and development trends.

For the calendar year beginning January 1, 2024, and ending December 31, 2024, the colleges reported the enrollment outlined in the table below.

Row	Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
1	University at Buffalo - SUNY	Rehabilitation Counseling – MS	64	25
2	Hofstra University	Rehabilitation Counseling – MS	24	6
3	Hunter College - CUNY	Rehabilitation Counseling – MS	45	14

*Row 3: Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in NYS graduating O&M instructors and VRTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

The following steps describe the ongoing activities to enable OCFS/NYSCB to continue the long-term Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan and the development of resources needed to recruit, prepare, and retain qualified personnel in NYS:

1. Continue to develop relationships with distance learning programs to locate curricula that meet the learning styles and needs of OCFS/NYSCB staff. These include video conferencing, videotapes, and/or computer technology.
2. Increase opportunities for staff in in-service training.
3. The in-service training coordinator of OCFS/NYSCB manages and evaluates all training programs attended by staff. All in-service training records are maintained electronically. A personnel file is maintained for each staff member containing name, title, phone number, date hired, district office, college major, and highest degree earned.
4. Continue to recruit qualified VRCs, O&Ms, and VRTs, including those from diverse backgrounds or who have foreign language skills.
5. Continue to partner with NYSED/ACCES-VR, ACCES-Adult Education, NYSDOL, and OTDA, and other agencies participating in the WIOA Interagency workgroup as applicable, with regard to the CSPD and the long-term training of workforce employees.
6. Provide financial reimbursement to VRCs maintaining their CRC certification upon renewal every five years, and for eligible OCFS/NYSCB staff opting to sit for the CRCC examination to obtain certification upon verification of required recertification or initial certification documents.
7. Collaborate with colleges and universities to train O&M specialists and VRTs. Graduates will qualify for national certification through the ACVREP or the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). OCFS/NYSCB and stakeholders continue to meet with officials from the University at Buffalo to establish a certificate training program in O&M. The certificate program would be the first of its kind, and graduates would be eligible for certification by the ACVREP.

Personnel Standards

Highest Standard for VRCs

OCFS/NYSCB hires only individuals who meet the NYS Department of Civil Service's personnel standard for VRCs. The standard is:

- A current Commission on rehabilitation counselor certification (CRCC certificate); OR
- A master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, including a supervised internship, from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited program; OR
- A master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling and notice of academic eligibility for the CRCC certificate examination.

Plans to Retrain Staff Who Do Not Meet the Highest Requirements

The NYS Department of Civil Service does not permit OCFS/NYSCB to hire new staff in VR counselor positions who do not meet the personnel standard.

Staff Development

OCFS/NYSCB understands the importance of maintaining a well-trained and current workforce. OCFS/NYSCB continues to work to increase training opportunities for counseling staff in identified areas of need as well as integrating a multidisciplinary approach. Obtaining participant perspective, by participating in events and public forums offered by blindness support agencies, is encouraged when workload and fiscal considerations allow.

OCFS/NYSCB staff attend workshops, conferences, and agency developed training sessions. Training has been offered in counseling, rehabilitation, medical aspects of disability, job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural diversity, informed choice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other topics related to vocational rehabilitation. OCFS/NYSCB contracts with Adaptive Technology Centers throughout the state. Upon request, the centers provide training to OCFS/NYSCB staff on new access technology for individuals with disabilities.

Information gained by staff attending conferences or training is shared at staff meetings with local staff. District managers share the information with senior staff at biweekly conference calls and quarterly meetings of district managers. and information is disseminated to all staff as appropriate.

OCFS/NYSCB participates in an Executive Steering Committee for Diversity Equity and Inclusion. In their ongoing commitment to inclusion and diversity in the workplace, the committee is currently evaluating ways for OCFS/NYSCB to be more inclusive in their recruitment efforts. OCFS/NYSCB has encouraged their staff to participate in subcommittees to promote diversity at OCFS/NYSCB. As part of this initiative, training will be provided to all staff on the topics of Implicit Bias and LGBTQ. An OCFS/NYSCB mission statement was reviewed and is being modified to be inclusive of the population they serve. In PY 2025, an LGBTQ Advisory Committee was formed at OCFS/NYSCB to develop training and provide resources for staff. A goal of this committee is to revise the OCFS/NYSCB intake process to be more inclusive of gender identity.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

OCFS/NYSCB continues to obtain the services of individuals able to communicate in the native language of individuals who are of limited English proficiency (LEP) or require American Sign Language. Qualified interpreters are hired for services for individuals who are deaf-blind or who require in-person language interpretation. OCFS/NYSCB staff with the required qualifications may be used for this purpose or subcontractors with specialty skills may be used.

OCFS/NYSCB also uses LanguageLine Solutions® for telephone interpretation services, which offers interpretation services in over 290 languages.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act

OCFS/NYSCB coordinates policy and services relating to transition services for students who are legally blind from school to adult services and begins planning VR services for individuals with disabilities prior to their exiting high school. The coordination of meaningful transition services for students with disabilities from school-age to postsecondary settings is a priority for OCFS/NYSCB and may begin as early as age 10.

OCFS/NYSCB serves as VR liaisons to their regional school districts. OCFS/NYSCB informs educators on OCFS/NYSCB services and application processes; participates in regional trainings, annual kickoff meetings and/or teacher in-service trainings with school districts; provides informational pamphlets on OCFS/NYSCB services; and participates in local job fairs where youth with disabilities are seeking employment opportunities.

OCFS/NYSCB AND NYSED COLLABORATE ON A REGULAR BASIS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES AND VR PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR FACILITATING TRANSITION SERVICES, AND TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

RESOURCES TO ASSIST SCHOOLS AND RELATED COMMUNITY SUPPORT ENTITIES IN PLANNING FOR TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE LEGALLY BLIND. AT THE STATE LEVEL, BOTH AGENCIES HAVE DESIGNATED PERSONNEL THAT PROVIDE OVERSIGHT AND LEADERSHIP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES, INTERAGENCY TRAINING, AND OTHER STATE-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES FOR TRANSITION SERVICES. AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, VR COUNSELORS WORK CLOSELY WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF, WHERE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIALISTS WHO COLLABORATE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS. OCFS/NYSCB WILL CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH SCHOOLS TO ENABLE THE SMOOTH TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE LEGALLY BLIND FROM SCHOOL TO WORK.COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (SECTION 101(A)(11) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT)

J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

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

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

(A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

(B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

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

(D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

(E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

(F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

OCFS/NYSCB transition policy states that as a participant in the school's transition planning process, OCFS/NYSCB staff should provide consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational services, contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes to facilitate the development of the individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the IDEA, and identify the need for involvement of other state agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community based services whose resources can assist students and youth who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition planning and service delivery process, and identify the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, for each agency. It also states that OCFS/NYSCB is responsible for providing information to assist in the coordination of the IEP and individualized plan for employment (IPE), including the selection of vocational goals that are consistent with labor market needs and integrated community living opportunities. OCFS/NYSCB is only responsible for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the OCFS/NYSCB counselor. Financial responsibility for services, other than those which are mandated for school districts by federal or state statute or regulation, may be shared by other agencies, including OCFS/NYSCB.

Cooperative efforts between the schools and OCFS/NYSCB take place on a daily basis at the district office level. OCFS/NYSCB Children's Consultants provide schools with technical support, help parents learn to advocate effectively for their children, and purchase services to supplement those that school districts are required to provide. As the student nears transition age, the OCFS/NYSCB Children's Consultants' familiarity with particular students allows for a more effective transition to the vocational rehabilitation program. In cooperation with the school and community agencies, OCFS/NYSCB vocational rehabilitation counselors encourage and help individuals to live more independently and develop meaningful employment plans. During school years, OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors can provide vocational guidance and counseling, resource information, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and VR/transition services that help students begin to identify and explore their career interests. These services support obtaining competitive integrated employment outcomes including supported employment. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB counselors may be able to provide job related occupational tools, purchase low vision aids, facilitate, and coordinate work-based learning experiences and assist in obtaining employment.

OCFS/NYSCB employs eleven vocational rehabilitation counselors who work with transition age youth. The transition counselors provide educational guidance to OCFS/NYSCB vocational rehabilitation counselors and encourage student and parent involvement in the transition process. Brochures describing OCFS/NYSCB services have been widely distributed. The brochures are available in regular print, large print, and Braille (upon request) and electronically. OCFS/NYSCB staff frequently visit transition career fairs and attend high school open houses and present information about OCFS/NYSCB at college programs held on college campuses. In addition, staff participate in transition conferences and work closely with many staff from local school districts to reinforce the mission of VR, explain the role VR plays in the transition process, and discuss VR policies and procedures.

The OCFS/NYSCB Transition Policy requires that the student's IPE be developed within 90 days of eligibility determination. Information on the IPE should be consistent with the content of the IEP, including vocational goals, educational and rehabilitation objectives, projected dates, and responsibilities for participation in the transition process. OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors have

received training on this policy requirement and on the requirements of coordinating the IPE with the IEP. All OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors have been actively developing employment plans for youth.

OCFS/NYSCB Transition Counselors also work closely with NYSED Transition Specialists and the Office of Special Education Educational Partnership. OCFS/NYSCB will continue to access the resources available through the network of Regional Partnership Centers. The Partnership Centers will continue to provide training targeted for parents, school districts, and other agency providers on topics such as transition and the IEP, measurable post-secondary goals, and work-based learning.

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC)

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC) is a five-year federally funded project which provides technical assistance to improve services for children and youth who are deaf-blind (ages 0-21). The contract supporting NYDBC was extended from October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2028. The NYDBC is housed at Queens College in Flushing, New York and is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). OCFS/NYSCB has agreed to collaborate on specific initiatives with NYDBC. Specifically, OCFS/NYSCB assisted NYDBC in disseminating a state-wide needs assessment to increase the early identification of children who are deaf-blind in NYS. OCFS/NYSCB staff also receive considerable technical assistance and training from NYDBC that will increase knowledge and skills in addressing the developmental and educational needs of children who are deaf-blind. OCFS/NYSCB will also be involved in collaborative relationships with local, regional and Statewide teams (as necessary) to support and improve systems to better serve children and youth.

Consultation and Technical Assistance

OCFS/NYSCB staff provide consultation and technical assistance to assist local educational agencies (LEAs or “school districts”) in planning for the transition of students who are legally blind from school to post-school activities. This includes pre-employment transition services and vocational rehabilitation services; providing guidance and professional development to educational and vocational rehabilitation personnel responsible for facilitating the transition planning process and the development and coordination of student individualized education programs (IEPs) and IPEs. OCFS/NYSCB technical assistances provides information about each agency's roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, and the state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services. OCFS/NYSCB also coordinates efforts to satisfy the documentation requirements set forth in Title IV of the Rehabilitation Act regarding students with disabilities who are considering sub-minimum wage employment as a post-high school option (Section 511) and pre-employment transition services (Section 113). OCFS/NYSCB also has established policies and procedures to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities, including outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need pre-employment transition services and/or transition services.

Transition Planning

OCFS/NYSCB works with students, families, and school districts to facilitate the coordination of pre-employment transition services and transition services for students who are legally blind and transitioning from school to the world of adult responsibilities and work. OCFS/NYSCB recognizes that these efforts are critical to enable students to achieve maximum success in employment, post-secondary education, independent living, and community participation, and is committed to being

an active partner in the transition process. Making the transition from school to the adult world requires careful planning and a cooperative effort among families, school staff and community service providers. Planning helps students, their families and school districts design services to maximize the student's years in school to prepare for full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

The OCFS/NYSCB VR program serves eligible transition aged students ages ten years and older by providing an array of services that give students the tools necessary to enable them to make informed decisions about their future goals. The youth and his or her parents work with the OCFS/NYSCB counselor to set academic and career goals and put a plan in motion to meet those goals. This often includes gaining work experience before graduating from high school, as well as learning self-advocacy and independent living skills that help lead to future success.

The Transition Policy was revised in 2024. The policy provides information about the requirements, roles, and responsibilities of VR in preparing students with disabilities for competitive integrated employment. It includes updated information regarding pre-employment transition services and outlines the role of the vocational rehabilitation counselor as an active participant in the transition planning process. OCFS/NYSCB's responsibilities lie primarily in providing technical consultation to schools and preparing students for permanent employment. OCFS/NYSCB staff use their knowledge and experience to influence schools to provide services needed to prepare students to participate in postsecondary, employment and community living outcomes.

Some of the ways OCFS/NYSCB works with school personnel in the transition process include:

1. Sharing knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes;
2. Identifying the need for involvement by other state agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community-based services whose resources can assist students who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition planning and service delivery process;
3. Providing information to assist in the selection of vocational goals that are consistent with labor market needs and integrated community living opportunities, including information about:
    a. Work site accommodations;
    b. Employer expectations;
    c. Labor trends and occupational outlooks;
    d. Job entry qualifications;
    e. Job placement analysis;
    f. Work opportunities; and
    g. And other vocationally-related issues.

OCFS/NYSCB supports the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) from the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments which includes skills that are not part of the core curriculum of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. The ECC is the body of knowledge and skills needed by students with vision loss in order to be successful in schools and in post-graduate pursuits as a result of unique, disability-related needs.

OCFS/NYSCB Children's Consultants and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will continue to emphasize to school district personnel, the importance of integrating the ECC into standard academic instruction and routine daily tasks and encourage school staff to work closely with itinerant vision teachers and staff from local private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide the comprehensive services needed by students.

Formal Interagency Agreement with the State Educational Agency

OCFS/NYSCB revised the State Education Agency (SEA) Agreement in 2020. The Joint Agreement between the NYSED Office of Special Education (OSE) and OCFS/NYSCB will assist in the facilitation of the transition of students who are legally blind, including those with additional disabilities, from school to post-school activities, including the receipt of pre-employment transition services, transition services, and other vocational rehabilitation services. The agreement provides an overview of the purpose, objectives and joint responsibilities of each party in the provision of pre-employment transition and transition services for students who are legally blind.

Specifically, the agreement:

1) Strengthens shared efforts to prepare youth who are legally blind for successful careers, community jobs, and independent living;
2) Outlines a collaborative framework for coordinating State and local services and resources; and
3) Provides guidance for coordinating plans, policies, and procedures developed to facilitate the transition of students who are legally blind from school to post-school activities, including the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services leading to employment.

The new agreement also includes the following:

- Information regarding pre-employment transition services;
- Delineate that the responsibilities of OCFS/NYSCB include providing consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of youth from school to post-school activities;
- Delineate the responsibilities of each party with respect to transition planning in order to facilitate the development of the IEP for each student;
- Articulate the financial responsibilities of each agency involved in the transition process;
- List the procedures for outreach to, and identification of, students with disabilities in need of transition services;
- Document requirements with regard to students with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and
- Provide an assurance that neither the SEA nor the LEA will enter into an arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The joint agreement clarifies that school districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students in school. School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by federal or state statutes and regulations. OCFS/NYSCB personnel consult with schools to see that adult services are part of the planning and decision-making process for students with disabilities in transition.

OCFS/NYSCB is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the OCFS/NYSCB counselor. Transition services for youth are to be aligned with labor market needs, integrated community living opportunities, and coordinated with the adult world to facilitate employment, post-secondary education, and community living outcomes. OCFS/NYSCB may be consulted for vocational evaluation interpretation, occupational opportunities, decision making with the Committee on Special Education, coordination with adult services, peer counseling, role modeling and job placement analysis. OCFS/NYSCB will provide pre-employment transition services if they are beyond the scope of the special education program and within the scope of VR services. Assessments for in-school youth may be purchased by OCFS/NYSCB when existing assessments fail to provide adequate information for the counselor to determine OCFS/NYSCB eligibility or to develop plans for OCFS/NYSCB services. If the student needs specific vocational services to prepare for employment upon exiting school, OCFS/NYSCB will fund these services.

Procedures for Outreach

OCFS/NYSCB and OSE will continue to work together to implement consistent policies and procedures for transition planning and services, including, but not limited to, student referral and access to VR services, including pre-employment transition services and transition services. OCFS/NYSCB collaborates with school districts and other state agencies to create a coordinated approach to the provision of all transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessments, services, and reporting requirements, and to promote increased access to work-based learning opportunities for students who are legally blind. The agreement specifically states that local school districts are responsible for providing transition services that improve academic and functional achievement and facilitate the movement of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including but not limited to, post-secondary education, vocational education, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. OCFS/NYSCB will provide Pre-ETS and VR/transition services that help students begin to identify and explore their career interests and will lead to employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment or supported employment.

K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

OCFS/NYSCB will work to increase outreach to businesses and develop relationships that lead to increased opportunities for individuals who are legally blind. OCFS/NYSCB has worked closely with NYSDOL and NYSED to coordinate the effectiveness in serving employers with a performance measure. An important part of that coordination is representation by OCFS/NYSCB on all 10 regional business engagement teams through NYSDOL. OCFS/NYSCB is represented by area district managers and will allow OCFS/NYSCB direct access to businesses within a community that is working with NYSDOL for services.

OCFS/NYSCB is a member of the National Employment Team (NET) through the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). CSAVR's NET provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through business development, business consulting, and corporate

relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, OCFS/NYSCB will better match business staffing needs with the skills and interests of participants seeking employment, as well as help business to retain employees who are legally blind. OCFS/NYSCB will continue to develop the connections between both CSAVR as well as businesses.

OCFS/NYSCB is a partner with the New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NYSCION) project, which began on January 1, 2022. There are 23 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) participating in NYSCION. Each participating LWDB has its own disability resource coordinator (DRC), serving 40 counties across NYS. The goals of NYSCION are to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities ages 18 and older, expand access to available NYS career center services, support and expand partnerships and service delivery across multiple education, workforce, disability, and career pathways programs, and increase employment outcomes and sustainability planning. OCFS/NYSCB participates in the project council meetings and has presented and provided information on OCFS/NYSCB services.

OCFS/NYSCB also connects with businesses on a regional level through direct outreach by district managers and district office staff. Regional and small businesses are best accessed through a regional approach, and local OCFS/NYSCB staff that live and work in the community are often the best resource. District offices will continue to develop relationships with businesses through internships, Work Experience Training opportunities and Work Tryouts. OCFS/NYSCB will also continue to collaborate with NYSED/ACCES-VR regional workforce coordinators to connect with businesses that have interest in working with VR program individuals. OCFS/NYSCB has held collaborative meetings with local businesses' human resources hiring managers and will continue to foster these relationships through ongoing meetings on a regional basis. OCFS/NYSCB will use these connections to make matches between participants' skills and local job openings.

OCFS/NYSCB has established mechanisms to assist transition age youth to access paid work experiences during their teenage years. OCFS/NYSCB transition counselors will continue to work closely with students and businesses to develop appropriate integrated work experiences in local communities. Counselors will also work closely with school staff to coordinate work-based learning experiences for students. Job coaching services will be provided when the vocational rehabilitation counselor has determined that the services are necessary for the individual to benefit from the work experience. Many private agencies for individuals who are blind in NYS have developed preemployment transition services within the prevocational programs that assist students in vocational clarification, job seeking skills, work readiness skills, interviewing preparation and resume writing. Most summer work experiences that have been developed through partnerships with OCFS/NYSCB staff, local businesses, and staff of private agencies for individuals who are blind. Many work experiences did remain virtual, however, due to the high rate of job openings throughout NYS students and youth were able to establish relationships with employers either on their own or through community rehabilitation providers. In the summer of 2024, 37% of OCFS/NYSCB students were working and 93% of transition-age youth were engaged in work, programming, or school. Through work experiences, it is expected that transition-age students and youth will be able to experience work life, explore careers and fields of interest, and access spending money.

L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In February 2022, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul developed the Office of the Chief Disability Officer. This new office has been pivotal in bringing together all state agencies and partners that serve the disability community. Work has begun and will continue to evaluate service delivery in NYS

and address service delivery gaps as they are identified. OCFS/NYSCB is represented on a number of committees through the direction of the Office of the Chief Disability Officer.

OCFS/NYSCB collaborates with OPWDD and OMH in the provision of employment and supported employment services. OCFS/NYSCB plans to work to increase collaboration and communications with partner state agencies and will focus on sharing specific knowledge and expertise in the area of vision loss. The encouragement of a multidisciplinary approach will be promoted at both a regional and state level.

OCFS/NYSCB will encourage staff to provide in-service presentations for OPWDD and OMH staff regarding blindness, vision rehabilitation therapy, orientation, and mobility, as well as job-site accommodations. OCFS/NYSCB recognizes that collaboration with these partner state agencies is integral to the employment success of individuals served by multiple agencies.

OCFS/NYSCB actively participates in the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). The MISCC was established by Chapter 551 of the Laws of 2002. The MISCC is responsible for ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages with physical, intellectual, developmental, and mental disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated settings appropriate to their individual needs. The council is currently led by OMH, and OCFS/NYSCB is also active on the MISCC employment subcommittee. The employment subcommittee is currently in the process of developing goals but will be continuing the work of the Employment First Commission.

OCFS/NYSCB will continue to participate in these initiatives advocating for legally blind individuals who are receiving OCFS/NYSCB services and will continue to work to provide seamless services to participants in conjunction with our partner state agencies.

OCFS/NYSCB has developed an initiative to work with the NYS Department of Veterans Affairs in an effort to provide training to all OCFS/NYSCB staff on the services available to veterans. As part of this initiative, resources on available services for veterans will be developed for staff and participants. OCFS/NYSCB intake practices are being updated to include information gathering about an individual's military service, veteran status, and any veterans' services they are currently receiving.

OCFS/NYSCB establishes cooperative agreements primarily with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers for assessment and training services through three types of outcomes-based contracts: comprehensive services, assistive technology services, and vocational evaluation/placement services. Contractors provide agreed upon assessment and training services within a specific geographic area. Where an individual's needs call for specialized services outside the scope of these contracts, or where there is no service available in a particular geographic area, OCFS/NYSCB district offices seek out additional providers and develop local agreements to obtain the services.

Comprehensive contract services are designed to assist participants with a goal of employment to develop or improve the basic skills they need to successfully seek and maintain employment. For some, this may begin with a referral for low vision services. Providers assess each participant to determine their unique needs. The assessment is followed by services that may include comprehensive and integrated training in basic life skills for preparation for competitive or supported employment, along with prevocational (for transition-age youth) and vocational training services to prepare participants to seek employment and enter the workforce.

OCFS/NYSCB initiated new five-year contracts for comprehensive services for individuals who are blind on January 1, 2024. The total number of providers is 20 Statewide. OCFS/NYSCB would like to highlight the addition of a service specific to Braille that developed from work of a Braille Advisory Committee that included OCFS/NYSCB staff, partner providers as well as community stakeholders. Training on the new guidelines was held in each OCFS/NYSCB region. Updated guidelines were posted to the OCFS/NYSCB website, www.visionloss.ny.gov, and are revised as needed.

Assistive technology contract (ATC) services provide participants with computer and/or computer-related technical training leading to employment. In January 2023, ATC contracts were awarded, through a Solicitation of Interest process, in seven areas of the state: Buffalo, Rochester, Central New York, Capital District, Hudson Valley, New York City, and Hempstead, Long Island for the period January 2023-December 2027. Participants referred for computer technology services participate in assessment and training to prepare them for postsecondary education, vocational training, and employment. Participants had the opportunity to view a wide selection of appropriate hardware and adaptive software, and to have input into the development of an equipment recommendation to meet their individual needs.

OCFS/NYSCB conducts quality assurance reviews with all OCFS/NYSCB Comprehensive Services Contract providers, ATC providers, and placement providers on a regularly scheduled basis. The reviews will cover all contracted services and will measure provider performance against contractual standards and contract guidelines. The quality assurance review includes an off-site review of randomly selected participant case files, a participant satisfaction survey, and on-site meetings with direct service staff and administration. A report detailing the results of the review and any recommendations for improvement is shared with the provider and the OCFS/NYSCB district office(s) in the provider's catchment areas. Training is developed and offered to providers and staff based on areas of need.

OCFS/NYSCB and the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) revamped services to deaf-blind participants. OCFS/NYSCB and HKNC modeled the contracted services to the Comprehensive Services Contract and aligned the service naming convention to align with the other CRP's outcome/contract services. Rates were determined for each service based on the inclusion of auxiliary services, such as interpreting, audiological aids and on-site time required for the participant to actively engage in services.

In 2012, OCFS/NYSCB began entering into agreements with nonprofit organizations for the provision of benefits advisement services. OCFS/NYSCB currently has 19 vendors approved for the provision of benefits advisement services throughout NYS, three additional providers have been approved to provide this service since 2019. Providers of these services include agencies chartered primarily for provision of services to individuals who are blind, independent living centers, and other agencies that have engaged staff who are trained and certified by the Social Security Administration, by the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations, or by Virginia Commonwealth University. Many of these providers offer advisement not only on Social Security benefits but also on a host of other benefits that may be affected by entering employment.

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)

CSAVR's National Employment Team (NET) provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through business development, business consulting, and corporate relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, OCFS/NYSCB can better match business staffing needs

with the skills and interests of participants seeking employment, as well as help business to retain employees who experience disability. The NET provides:

- businesses with direct access to qualified applicants and support services from the public VR system;
- VR participants with access to national employment opportunities and career development resources; and
- VR agencies with a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices, and business connections.

A designated point of contact serves as the primary contact for businesses seeking to partner with OCFS/NYSCB. In the past year, through the NET partnership, OCFS/NYSCB has shared information and job postings from federal and corporate partners with OCFS/NYSCB staff and placement partners. In addition, OCFS/NYSCB has distributed NET-shared information on a number of internship and skill-camp opportunities for high school and college students.

Working With Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

OCFS/NYSCB works closely with its community rehabilitation partners to create opportunities for successful careers for its participants who are legally blind. This partnership is most visible in the annual Vision Rehabilitation Institute, which is planned jointly by OCFS/NYSCB and CRP staff together for training and networking on issues related to workforce development. The 2023 VRI had the largest attendance of staff and partner providers of any previous VRI in the past.

OCFS/NYSCB implemented a new five-year vocational evaluation and placement contract that began January 1, 2020. OCFS/NYSCB worked to increase the network of providers throughout the state, reaching out to new providers through the NYS general VR agency. The awardees include agencies for individuals who are blind, agencies that provide services to individuals with disabilities, independent living centers, and individually owned businesses, affording participants greater choice in selecting an appropriate provider. New guidelines for these services were developed and distributed, and joint training sessions for OCFS/NYSCB staff and providers were held in the spring of 2020. OCFS/NYSCB offered two trainings in December 2021 to refresh staff and providers on the contract as agencies pivoted back to in-person services.

OCFS/NYSCB launched a new Assistive Technology Services contract in January 2023. OCFS/NYSCB home office staff offered two trainings in December 2022 to make staff and providers aware of any changes as well as reinforce expectations of the five-year contract. OCFS/NYSCB continues to provide assistive technology services and devices to individuals through seven Assistive Technology Center (ATC) contracts, covering seven areas. Participants who are deaf-blind can receive assessment and training at the adaptive technology center located at the Helen Keller National Center in Sands Point. Participants who are unable to access technology services at an ATC may receive services through private vendors located throughout the state. All approved assistive technology contractors and vendors, and the services they offer, are listed on the OCFS/NYSCB website.

Adaptive technology centers are required to have an array of equipment available for the participant to review during the assessment process. Training is then customized to the participant's need both in terms of hardware and software.

Two OCFS/NYSCB loan closets also provide Statewide access to loaner equipment while a participant is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

OCFS/NYSCB continues to encourage the development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available. OCFS/NYSCB has had success in this area during 2023 in the fields of digital accessibility and web security. OCFS/NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of prevocational programs beginning with youth at age 10 and continuing through the transition years. These programs will provide both variety and increasing complexity so that youth are well prepared for postsecondary education and training. OCFS/NYSCB worked diligently with CRPs and was able to transition many of these programs to digital platforms during the pandemic. As a result, many participants who may have been idle or unable to receive services were able to engage and gain knowledge and skills that will help them in their future employment opportunities.

Meeting the Needs of Special Populations

In February 2022, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul developed the Office of the Chief Disability Officer. This new office has been pivotal in bringing together all state agencies and partners that serve the disability community. Work has begun and will continue to evaluate service delivery in New York State and address service delivery gaps as they are identified. OCFS/NYSCB is represented on a number of committees through the direction of the Office of the Chief Disability Officer.

OCFS/NYSCB staff participates in educational webinars and networking events presented by the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC), along with being a member of the NYDBC 4201 Network and Friends, which serves as a resource to deaf-blind youth, families, and professionals, providing technical assistance (program development and support) to improve services for children and youth who are deaf-blind (ages 0-21).

OCFS/NYSCB remains a member of the Interagency Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing formed to coordinate the collection of information on population needs, engage in comprehensive strategic planning, and prepare legislative and policy recommendations to the governor and the NYS Legislature.

Cooperation With National Industries for the Blind

OCFS/NYSCB has designated the NYS Preferred Source Program for People Who Are Blind (NYSPSP), a subsidiary of the National Industries for the Blind (NIB), as its designee for NYS preferred-source products. The creation of service sector jobs is highlighted as a priority in the Letter of Designation (LOD).

OCFS/NYSCB encourages NIB associated agencies to provide needed work experience and skill training to enable individuals to seek competitive employment in an integrated setting. NYSPSP has developed a Business Development Innovation Committee with guidance from OCFS/NYSCB to look at opportunities to advance and modernize employment opportunities including partnering with businesses to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Cooperative Agreement with Recipients of Grants for Services to American Indians

OCFS/NYSCB continues to act as a partner with the Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (SNI TVR) Program. The partnership represents both parties' commitment to mutual cooperation, coordination, and collaboration to increase vocational opportunities for members of the Seneca Nation of Indians who are legally blind. It establishes shared values, outlines how services will be coordinated, and how members of both organizations will participate in cross-training activities. The collaborative relationship between the OCFS/NYSCB Buffalo District Office and the SNI TVR Program has increased awareness, acceptance, and utilization of OCFS/NYSCB services. OCFS/NYSCB maintains a relationship in which referrals are handled in a timely and culturally sensitive manner. OCFS/NYSCB staff conducts in-service training with agencies on the Cattaraugus Reservation and works closely with staff of the Salamanca satellite of the Section 121 program and with the Area Office for the Aging on the reservation. OCFS/NYSCB staff serves on the Section 121 Project Advisory Board, which meets monthly. OCFS/NYSCB further supports the activities of the Section 121 Tribal VR Program through the delivery of state-funded services to children and elderly individuals, allowing them to better focus resources on tribal members seeking employment.

State Programs Carried Out Under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998

The OCFS/NYSCB Buffalo equipment loan closet, managed through the Center for Assistive Technology at Buffalo EDU is a TRAID site. OCFS/NYSCB contracts with the Buffalo equipment loan closet. These combined efforts with the TRAID program are managed by the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs and provides OCFS/NYSCB participants short- and long-term equipment loans. These participants often need equipment quickly while waiting to receive their purchased equipment or need equipment for a specific time-limited period.

Programs Carried Out by the Undersecretary for Rural Development of the USDA

OCFS/NYSCB has not had an active working relationship with programs carried out by the assistant to the secretary for rural development in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will look into opportunities for future collaboration to determine whether opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind are available.

Noneducational Agencies Serving Out-of-School Youth

Placement services continue to be a priority for OCFS/NYSCB. A workgroup consisting of both OCFS/NYSCB and provider staff developed expectations and requirements for delivery of placement assistance which enhanced delivery of job seeking, job development, and other employment services. OCFS/NYSCB and a workgroup representing its major community rehabilitation partners continue to meet periodically throughout the year to discuss how to deliver quality programming to participants. OCFS/NYSCB and community provider staff continue to meet through the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment. OCFS/NYSCB works closely with the Chapter 515 programs to provide supported employment services to participants including out-of-school youth. OCFS/NYSCB district office staff has relationships with local social service agencies that provide essential services to out-of-school youth. These relationships provide an opportunity for referrals of individuals who are legally blind to OCFS/NYSCB for vocational services and a reciprocal referral opportunity when out-of-school youth involved with OCFS/NYSCB need the services provided through the state social service network. OCFS/NYSCB will continue to work to develop relationships with other non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth so that youth who are legally blind who are eligible for VR services can receive those services.

OCFS/NYSCB in partnership with NYSDOL, was meeting monthly as part of the Youth Collaborative, which seeks to increase awareness of agencies serving out-of-school youth and increase referrals for services. These meetings were put on hold due to the pandemic and a change in the availability of NYSDOL staff. There have been conversations about resuming the meetings again. Other youth-focused agencies are also part of the collaboration and include the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), NYSED/ACCESS-VR, NYS Higher Education (OHE), and the OCFS/NYSCB Division of Child Welfare and Community Services/Bureau of Youth Development and Crossover Initiatives.

State Use Contracting Programs

OCFS/NYSCB accesses goods and services through the NYS Preferred Source Program (NYSPSP) for People Who Are Blind. NYSPSP is a state-mandated initiative to create and sustain employment opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired. State and local agencies are required to purchase products and services that appear on the Preferred Source List through NYSPSP. These commodities are produced by affiliated nonprofit agencies in NYS that employ people who are blind or visually impaired.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The Office of Child and Family Services/New York State Commission for the Blind is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA[14], and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act[15];

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

New York State Commission for the Blind

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency)[16] agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[17] , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[18] , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

Enter the name of designated State agency

New York State Office of Children and Family Services

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[19] , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[20] , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.

7. The (enter the name of authorized representative below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

Enter the name of authorized representative below

Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden

8. The (enter the title of authorized representative below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;

Enter the title of authorized representative below

Commissioner and Executive Deputy Commissioner, OCFS

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Footnotes

[14] Public Law 113-128.
[15] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.
[16] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
[17] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
[18] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations.
[19] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

Certification Signature

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Title of Signatory	Commissioner and Executive Deputy Commissioner, OCFS
Date Signed	

ASSURANCES

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

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	Yes
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	Yes
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	Yes
3.b.(A) “is an independent State commission” (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) “has established a State Rehabilitation Council” (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	Yes
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State	No

The State Plan must include	Include
Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	Yes
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	Yes
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14)of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	Yes
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	Yes
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	Yes
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	Yes
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	Yes
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	Yes
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A "baseline" indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, "baseline" indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as "baseline" based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and

- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as "baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA." The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as "baseline" for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as "baseline" for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	42%		45%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,000		$6,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2024 State Plan.*

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. 24 If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for TAA. If the state includes TAA in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate TAA in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III, IV, and V of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

Has the state incorporated TAA into the sections indicated above?

Yes

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

A. ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS AND IMPACT

1. DISCUSS LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR JOBS IN INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE THAT MAY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS. (20 CFR 641.302(D)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

The purpose of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) State Plan (henceforth referred to as "the Plan") is to outline a four-year strategy for the provision of employment training and other authorized activities for eligible individuals; as well as provide a description of the planning and implementation process for SCSEP services. The Plan considers the distribution of eligible individuals and employment opportunities across the State.

The goal of this Plan is to explain how New York State (NYS), through the NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), will administer and monitor SCSEP through long-term coordination among the various State SCSEP grantees and sub-grantees, and to facilitate the efforts of key stakeholders. This occurs through coordination with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and other WIOA partners. These partners' efforts to work collaboratively to provide job seekers and businesses with seamless

service across the WIOA System will assist in accomplishing the goals of SCSEP. There is an emphasis on the importance of strengthening partnerships between grantees and program providers and involvement in community initiatives. The grantees are expected to work collaboratively to provide employment training for SCSEP participants at agency host or training sites. The anticipated outcomes are to improve self-sufficiency among participants, provide meaningful civic engagement opportunities that help strengthen communities, and transition SCSEP participants into employment opportunities.

SCSEP is a community service and work-based training program for older workers authorized in Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and administered by USDOL/ETA. SCSEP is the only federally sponsored employment and training program targeted specifically to low-income older individuals.

SCSEP provides subsidized, part-time, community service training for unemployed, low-income persons aged 55 or older who have poor employment prospects. Through this program, older workers have access to SCSEP services and employment training assistance through the One-Stop Career Center System. Program participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest of the federal, state, or local minimum wage.

Service priority is given to individuals meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Is a veteran or a spouse of a veteran;
- Is 65 years of age or older;
- Has a disability;
- Has limited English proficiency;
- Has low literacy skills;
- Resides in a rural area;
- Has low employment prospects;
- Has failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title I of WIOA;
- Is homeless or at risk for homelessness; or
- Is formerly incarcerated or on supervision from release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination. (Effective March 25, 2021, the 2020 reauthorization of the OAA added this tenth characteristic category that has priority of service over those individuals who meet only the basic eligibility criteria related to age, income, and employment).

NYSOFA administers the state SCSEP grantee program in eight regions in NYS, contracting with four regional providers that provide SCSEP services locally (see Attachment A, available on the on the NYSOFA website. The four regional providers are:

- Associates for Training and Development, Inc. (A4TD);
- New York City - Aging ((NYC Aging) also known as New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA));
- PathStone Corporation (PSC); and
- The Workplace, Inc. (TWP).

In addition, seven national SCSEP grantees also provide SCSEP services in NYS:

- A4TD;
- Easter Seals, Inc. (ES);

- Senior Service of America, Inc. (SSA);
- National Council on Aging, Inc (NCOA);
- National Urban League (NUL);
- TWP; and
- The National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA).

Each organization was invited to contribute to the development of this Plan.

Economic Projections and Impact

Long Term Job Projections

In the full Economic Analysis section (II.a.1.A.) of the Combined Plan projections for jobs in NYS are detailed for in-demand and emerging industries and occupations. For all workers, including older workers, the industry sector of Health Care and Social Assistance is in highest demand with occupations including Personal Care Aides, Home Health Aides, Social and Human Service Assistants, and Child Care Workers. Ambulatory health care services also provide opportunities for employment in clerical, administrative, and management staff. The retail trade industry provides occupations for older workers as salespersons, clerks, and order fillers. The leisure and hospitality sector provides the second highest rate of growth in NYS since 2010, presenting further employment opportunities for older workers in service-related occupations.

One of the objectives of the workforce development system is to encourage LWDBs to plan strategically and focus their resources on priority industries, and eventually on priority occupations within those industries. To assist in these efforts, the New York State Department of Labor's (NYSDOL's) Bureau of Labor Market Information Division of Research and Statistics developed these reports to identify "significant industries" in each of the ten regions in NYS. Industries presented here are classified according to their North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code.

Table 1 – Significant Industries: lists significant industries in the eight SCSEP regions based on several factors including employment levels, wage levels, job growth (both net and percent) over the 2015-2020 period and expected job growth based on industry employment projections through 2028. Priority industries that may have been designated by economic development or workforce development officials were also considered.

Table 1. NYS Significant Industries

Significant Industries	**Source**	**Significant Industries – A Report to The Workforce Development System – New York State Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Market Information Division of Research and Statistics**
Region	**Counties in Region**	**Significant Industries**
1	Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond	Construction Trade; Transportation & Utilities; Information; Financial Activities; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health & Social Assistance; and Leisure and Hospitality Services.
2	Rockland, Westchester	Construction; Manufacturing; Transportation & Warehousing; Information; Financial Activities; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health Care and Social Assistance; Arts, Amusement & Recreation; and Accommodation & Food Services.

3	Albany, Fulton, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady	Construction; Manufacturing; Transportation & Warehousing; Finance & Insurance; Professional & Business Services; Health Care; Health Care and Social Assistance; Educational Services; and State Government.
4	Clinton, Essex, Franklin	Agriculture; Construction; Manufacturing; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health Care & Social Assistance; Leisure & Hospitality; and Government.
5	Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence	Agriculture; Construction; Manufacturing; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health Care & Social Assistance; Leisure & Hospitality; and Government.
6	Tioga, Tompkins	Construction; Manufacturing; Transportation & Warehousing; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; and Health & Social Assistance Services.
7	Genesee, Monroe, Seneca, Wayne, Yates	Construction; Manufacturing; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health Care & Social Assistance; and Leisure & Hospitality.
8	Chautauqua, Erie	Construction; Manufacturing; Transportation & Warehousing; Professional & Business Services; Educational Services; Health & Social Assistance; and Leisure & Hospitality.

2. DISCUSS HOW THE LONG-TERM JOB PROJECTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN RELATE TO THE TYPES OF UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS FOR WHICH SCSEP PARTICIPANTS WILL BE TRAINED AND THE TYPES OF SKILL TRAINING TO BE PROVIDED. (20 CFR 641.302(D))

Long Term Job Projections and Unsubsidized Employment

All NYS SCSEP projects rely on collaboration with the local Career Centers for Labor Market Information (LMI) to identify in-demand businesses and to access training and participant skill development strategies for SCSEP participants that best match the demand of the local economy. In identifying key local businesses and potential job opportunities, SCSEP staff, in coordination with the SCSEP participant, develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The IEP is the participant's plan based on the skills and talents assessment conducted by the appropriate SCSEP staff person, or a recent assessment or plan developed by another employment and training program, and a related service strategy. The community service assignment with a host agency is an important aspect of the IEP since it provides a work environment to obtain needed job skills. The goal of the IEP is to develop the participant's training plan that will lead to an appropriate employment objective.

Some SCSEP projects have built strong partnerships with the Health Care sector. The Health Care partners provide training and hire older workers including Home Health Care Aide, Personal Care Aide, Companion, Certified Nurse Assistant, and Phlebotomist. On-the-Job Training (OJT) partnerships are also used in the Security Guard industry. SCSEP projects also provide ancillary services in career development to assist host agencies in providing training opportunities for eligible participants. Some of the training opportunities fall under the following general categories:

- Business/financial clerk;
- Computer operator;
- Kitchen aide/food preparation;
- Clerical;
- Receptionist;

- Retail;
- Childcare;
- Customer Service Representative;
- Maintenance/custodial; and
- Classroom aide.

All NYS SCSEP sub-grantees utilize training unique to their location, but as part of SCSEP optional special requests for Additional Training and Supportive Services (ATSS), NYS will request specialized training that in most cases leads to a credential that will enhance the participants ability to secure unsubsidized employment.

Some specific trainings anticipated include the following:

- Digital Literacy – in-person and virtual options based on a participant's current skill level. For those with advanced skills an opportunity to achieve a Microsoft Office Specialist certification will be offered.
- Healthcare – Personal Care Aid (PCA), Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), and Pharmacy Technician.
- Food Preparation – ServSafe Food Handler or Manager Certification.
- Childcare – Child Development Associate Certification and CPR/First Aid Certification.
- Miscellaneous – Commercial Driver's License (CDL), QuickBooks Certification, and Recovery Specialist.

3. DISCUSS CURRENT AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE (SUCH AS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AVAILABLE UNDER §15 OF THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT (29 U.S.C. 491-2) BY OCCUPATION), AND THE TYPES OF SKILLS POSSESSED BY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. (20 CFR 641.325(C))

Current and Projected Employment Opportunities

The greatest number of persons 55 and over in NYS are employed in:

- Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance Industry;
- Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative, and Waste Management Services;
- Retail Trade;
- Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing;
- Manufacturing; and
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Service.

Table 2. New York State, Persons Ages 55 and Over shows the number and percentage of persons age 55 and over by industry.

Table 2. New York State, Persons Ages 55 and Over			
Industry			
		Frequency	**Percent**
	NIU (Not in Universe)	3,696,080	60.50
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, and Mining	15,438	0.25
	Construction	171,184	2.80

	Manufacturing	133,573	2.19
	Wholesale and Retail Trade	221,235	3.62
	Transportation and Utilities	169,816	2.78
	Information	34,698	0.57
	Financial Activities	151,122	2.47
	Professional and Business Service	349,690	5.72
	Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	694,143	11.36
	Leisure and Hospitality	190,279	3.11
	Other Services, Except Public Administration	154,172	2.52
	Public Administration	127,789	2.09
	TOTAL	6,109,219	100.00

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2022 March Supplement.

The industries listed below present the highest probability for unsubsidized employment for most SCSEP participants:

- Personal Care and Services
  - Home Health Aides;
  - Personal Care Aides; and
  - Physical Therapist Aides.
- Office and Administration
  - Administrative Assistant;
  - Medical Secretaries; and
  - Office Clerks.
- Retail
  - Sales Clerk;
  - Cashiers; and
  - Customer Service Reps.
- Food Preparation and Service Workers
  - Cooks; and
  - Food Aides.

SCSEP projects utilize O*NET, developed under sponsorship of USDOL/ETA through a grant to the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The O*NET database contains occupations covering the entire U.S. economy. The Interactive Content Model in O*NET details the knowledge, skills, characteristics, and abilities needed for these occupations. O*NET provides a summary for each occupation that details the tasks, technological skills, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, education, work styles and values, and wage and employment trends associated with that occupation.

Additionally, information from O*Net Online and My Next Move has been successfully integrated directly into the SCSEP participant's IEP by at least one sub-grantee, A4TD (A4TD is a national grantee, but is also a sub-grantee in NYS). Prior to a Host Agency assignment, the applicant, with the assistance of A4TD staff and the Host Agency Supervisor, will do a skills self-assessment for each item in the Abilities, Work Styles, Work Activities, and Tasks sections for a specific occupation. This

assessment provides a blueprint for the participant by determining what skills and training(s) need to be developed, what skills the Host Agency can address and what skills need to be developed outside of the community service assignment. Within the first six months of the participant's enrollment, an assessment with the participant, A4TD staff and the Host Agency Supervisor is performed to determine what skills the participant has become proficient in, and which skills need improvement. This process highlights the participant's training progress and identifies areas where additional training is needed to increase the participant's ability to achieve unsubsidized employment.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY AND COORDINATION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS. THIS MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, BUT REGARDLESS OF PLACEMENT IN DOCUMENT, MUST INCLUDE:

A. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS, INCLUDING PLANS FOR USING THE WIOA ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS AGED 55 AND OLDER. (20 CFR 641.302(G), 641.325(E))

Service Delivery and Coordination

Coordination of SCSEP with Other Programs

A complete detail of the development and activities of the NYS WIOA Interagency Team is included in this Combined Plan in The State's Workforce Development Activities section (II.a.2.A.) and Implementation of State Strategy section (III.a.2.). NYSOFA, representing SCSEP, joined the team in late 2015.

Coordination with WIOA Title I Programs

The WIOA Interagency Team was originally formed to work together on the 2016 NYS Combined Plan. The Interagency Team continued to meet to develop strategies for the implementation of WIOA and coordination of services, referrals, and information sharing between partners, increasing awareness and understanding of the various Title I programs. The continued participation of the NYSOFA SCSEP staff on the team ensures that SCSEP eligible individuals are represented in the One-Stop Career Center System. WIOA mandates an MOU between all required partners with the LWDB and Chief Elected Officials (CEOs). The MOU must detail the SCSEP project's involvement in the One-Stop Career Center System.

NYSOFA and NYSDOL collaborated to develop the Office of Older Adult Workforce Development within NYSDOL. The collaborative planning began in late 2023 and has been ongoing. The mission is to strengthen services and support older New Yorkers and their families. The collective goal is to improve community design and interventions for older adults to stay active, engaged, working if they wish, volunteering and continuing to be a major economic asset to NYS.

Primary duties of the Office of Older Adult Workforce Development:

- Advise and assist the state in coordinating workforce development programs to address the needs of older adults in the workplace.

- Create an Older Worker website with resources for older adults on job placement, career building and development, digital literacy, occupational and soft skills training, and job support.
- Provide information on prohibitions against age discrimination in the workplace and remedies available to victims of such discrimination.
- Develop and facilitate training for Career Center Employment Counselors to become Older Worker Specialists within the Career Center System.
- Hold quarterly Community of Practice meetings with Career Center Older Worker Specialists.
- Meet with the NYSOFA liaison once a month to collaborate on program initiatives.
- Work with our Business Engagement Team on marketing and campaign to private and public sectors
- Consult with the division of human rights to provide information on prohibitions against age discrimination in the workplace and remedies available to victims of such discrimination.

Career Center Older Worker Specialists duties:

- Provide outreach and education to older adults on local workforce System services.
- Conduct workshops targeted to older workers, virtual and in person, such as *Using Age to Your Advantage.*
- Provide individual and group Employment Counseling to Older Workers.
- Refer older workers to additional services and providers as needed.
- Coordinate with community organizations to establish and maintain working relationships to improve local service delivery systems for the older population.
- Attend monthly meetings with coordinator on best practices, trainings, and resources in the local career centers.

NYSOFA's collaboration with NYSDOL's Older Adult Workforce Program continues to strengthen moving forward with further collaborations with providers of caregiver respite and volunteer opportunities. Additional collaborations are in process with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (ODTA) regarding the impact of the new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work rules.

B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

Coordination with Other Titles of the Older Americans Act

NYSOFA is the State Unit on Aging and oversees the activities carried out Statewide under the other titles of the OAA. Historically, NYSOFA's operation of SCSEP was performed through participating Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and their contractors, throughout NYS. As of July 1, 2018, NYSOFA changed its SCSEP operation from funding through 29 County AAAs to 8 regional programs awarded through a competitively bid RFA. The result left one SCSEP region, New York City, still operated by

the AAA and the remaining seven regions operated locally by three additional National Grantees; Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) which operates in five regions, PathStone, and The WorkPlace (TWP). While NYSOFA's SCSEP program is no longer operated through the AAAs, there is collaboration between the new regional SCSEP operators and the AAAs. NYSOFA will continue to foster the collaboration between the AAAs and their contractors and National Grantees in serving the employment needs of older workers. This will be achieved through in-person meetings and virtual meetings, conference calls, and other methods of communication.

As community partners have returned to in-person operations, state projects will re-establish and form new community partnerships to assist in providing needed services to older adults. In New York City, MOUs for partnerships will be submitted to the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), NYC Department of Veteran's Services, and the NYC Office of Emergency Management (OEM). NYC Aging will be making presentations to Re-Entry Citizens Network. Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) utilizes their partner relationships and partner networks to access SCSEP applicants. The partners act as an extension of A4TD by sharing SCSEP brochures and flyers, social media posts, and newsletters with their client base, and A4TD reciprocates with their partner's program materials.

Again, the National grantees referred to are sub-grantees of the NYS SCSEP project.

C. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES. (20 CFR 641.302(I))

Coordination with Other Public and Private Entities

The supportive services SCSEP projects must ensure the best possibilities for the success of SCSEP participants who rely on coordination from both AAA delivered services and other private entities and programs providing services to older adults and those with disabilities. Each SCSEP project throughout NYS accesses partners instrumental to SCSEP participant outreach, training, and placements. A cooperative relationship with NYSED/ACCES-VR enables State projects and National Grantees to access assistance for participants with disabilities. This partnership also provides vocational rehabilitation and training/job development alternatives for older clients. Other cooperative relationships that sub-grantees have cultivated include Literacy Volunteers, Office of Children and Family Services/NYS Commission for the Blind (OCFS/NYSCB), local community colleges, State University of New York (SUNY), county departments of social services (DSS) offices, regional museums, and local economic development agencies.

NYSOFA will continue to encourage additional practices and strategies to increase opportunities for participants with multiple barriers to employment and in need of supportive services. These include developing relationships with organizations serving people with disabilities, host site agencies serving minority populations, and participating in community partnerships with providers of support services. NYSOFA advises its sub-grantees to utilize host agencies as not only training sites and eventual employers of SCSEP participants, but also as sources of opportunities for supportive services.

Each regional SCSEP sub-grantee that delivers SCSEP services in NYS has its unique sources of supportive services. NYSOFA will continue to rely on the sub-grantees' in-depth community

knowledge, experience, and connects to private, public, faith-based, and special needs organizations to provide necessary supportive services.

NYSOFA, as the designated State Unit on Aging, monitors and supports the activities authorized by the OAA, as well as several Statewide programs, for the 59 AAAs across NYS. These services include nutrition, assistance with housing, transportation, Medicare and health Insurance, prevention of elder abuse, healthy aging, naturally occurring retirement communities (NORC), and NY Connects, which is a trusted place to go for free, unbiased information about long term services and supports in NYS for people of all ages or with any type of disability.

NYSOFA will also be seeking approval from USDOL/ETA to continue to provide Additional Training and Supportive Services (ATSS) to its sub-grantees. The supportive services request will include assistance to SCSEP participants with transportation, dental, eye care, and clothing. Additionally, the request will include continued assistance with technology, including lending of chrome books, mice, and assistance paying for connectivity expense.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))

Coordination with Labor Market and Training Initiatives

All NYS's SCSEP projects rely on coordination with the local Career Centers for LMI, and job training and participant skill development. In addition, the collaboration with local community-based organizations, educational institutions, and governmental entities as host agencies continues to provide in-demand training and potential employment placements. Local SCSEP staff will continue to reach out to local businesses and other resources to expand those relationships to ensure that community service employment assignments are truly providing the skill training that meets the needs of both participants and businesses.

E. ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SCSEP IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE STEPS THE STATE WILL TAKE TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. (20 CFR 641.335)

Coordination with One-Stop Career Center System

The continued participation of NYSOFA SCSEP staff on the WIOA Interagency Team represents SCSEP as an active partner in the One-Stop Career Center System and the goal of improving coordination of the System. SCSEP projects in NYS have close working relationships with the Career Centers. Many of the SCSEP program coordinators have an ongoing presence at the Career Centers and serve as the primary point of contact for older job seekers. SCSEP participants will be assigned to the local Career Centers to assist with administrative duties, providing valuable assistance to the Career Center while enhancing their training for unsubsidized employment. This coordination also assists with outreach, especially to rural areas of NYS. NYSOFA will encourage the continuation of these collaborative efforts, which will include using Career Centers for job listings, LMI, coordination on intensive services/training needed by specific participants, and other resources of value to SCSEP. In addition, NYSOFA will continue to encourage SCSEP projects and Career Centers to collaborate on joint training activities and job fairs, share job leads, and work together to engage the business community in Career Center and SCSEP initiatives that support local business interests.

F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

Efforts Working with Rural Economic Development Offices

The limited nature of employment opportunities and transportation options in rural areas presents a challenge for SCSEP operations. SCSEP efforts to work with local economic development offices are especially crucial in rural locations. In NYS, Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) are a key component in a transformative approach to state investment and economic development. The Regional Councils have been guided by their regional strategic economic development plans, which emphasize each region's unique assets and provide strategies to harness local resources to stimulate regional economic development and create jobs statewide. These plans, initially adopted in 2011, continue to be implemented today, with annual updates to address emerging State and regional challenges and opportunities. The REDCs are public-private partnerships made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations. The REDCs have redefined the way NYS invests in jobs and economic growth by putting in place a community-based, bottom-up approach and establishing a competitive process for State resources. Each REDC has implemented plans that will create jobs in the communities in each region and, except for New York City, includes rural areas. This Plan will encourage each SCSEP sub-grantee to continue with its efforts to work with their local economic development office. NYSOFA will assist all sub-grantees, with a focus on rural areas, in reaching out to local economic development offices.

2. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLACEMENT OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT. (20 CFR 641.302(E)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

Long Term Strategy for Engaging Businesses

In the State Strategy section (II.c.) of the Combined Plan, several methods of business engagement are discussed to be utilized by the various WIOA partners. One of the WIOA Interagency Team's workgroups is dedicated to the development of a common system for agencies to track their engagements of businesses. It is the goal of each SCSEP project to provide the training needed for each participant to maximize their potential toward transition to unsubsidized employment. To achieve this goal, strategies for engaging and developing partnerships with businesses within industries and occupations most likely to employ SCSEP participants provide the best opportunities.

SCSEP projects continually seek out employment opportunities with businesses and industries located in their communities. They track business trends and employment opportunities through participation/membership in their LWDBs, workforce committees, and chambers of commerce. SCSEP projects utilize staff as job developers. Part of their job development responsibilities entail meeting with local and regional businesses to discuss involvement with SCSEP, listen to the businesses' needs, and offer the opportunity for SCSEP participants to meet the businesses' needs. These one-on-one contacts are the basis for developing training strategies with the business, developing on-the-job experience contracts, or directly filling jobs while establishing or maintaining partnerships.

SCSEP projects utilize online programs to access information about jobs in specific areas or counties, along with required skill levels. Once identified, staff can contact those businesses who fall into high demand or high growth areas. Frequent contact with local businesses allows SCSEP staff to provide participants with information on local job availability and the skills needed to obtain those jobs. Staff are also involved in business outreach activities such as visiting with employer representatives at job fairs, involvement of employers in job search/job club training, and any other networking activities that

result in business relationship building. The pandemic necessitated staff to develop virtual means of contact with potential employers consisting of virtual job fairs and assisting participants with virtual interviews. Staff welcome the opportunity to provide information on hiring, training, and retaining older workers through meetings, seminars, workshops, presentations, and any other venues where potential businesses may be present. Though not all attendees will be direct business contacts, these activities help spread the word about the value and availability of older workers, address older worker stereotypes, and introduce businesses to the ageless workforce concept.

3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

Long Term Strategy for Serving Minority Older Individuals

NYS is a leading recipient of immigrants and minorities from around the globe. Three of NYS's largest cities (New York City, Albany, and Buffalo) have populations nearly half comprised of minorities (59%, 52% and 46%, respectively). In 2014 NYSOFA added the dedicated position of Advocacy Specialist to enhance the priority of services to those in greatest economic and social need, including but not limited to, services for rural residents, individuals with disabilities, Native Americans, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals at risk for institutional placement.

The Advocacy Specialist works with all of NYSOFA's programs to increase cultural competency and capacity to serve older minority individuals successfully Statewide. NYSOFA requires that all aging programs are compliant with the legal requirements as identified in the OAA, as well as the Elder Law, Civil and Human Rights legislation, including the NYS Human Rights law, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Federal Executive Order 13166, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For individuals with limited English proficiency, language access presents a potential barrier to employment. To mitigate this barrier, SCSEP projects make SCSEP enrollment and recruiting materials available in Spanish and other languages. Projects have access to telephone interpretation services, and some projects have bi-lingual program staff available to serve participants.

In addition to these efforts, the Plan's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP will be the continued encouragement of the recruitment of minorities. Minorities, especially, those with poor employment prospects, will be emphasized over the duration of the Plan to be a priority of NYSOFA and the aging network in NYS. Local SCSEP projects will continue to be required to give increased attention to recruiting and training those from disadvantaged communities through cooperative recruitment efforts with local community service programs and minority agencies. Community agencies that serve low-income individuals and minorities will be called upon, where appropriate, to serve as SCSEP worksites. Outreach strategies will include senior employment fairs, local media articles, announcements in newspapers, newsletters, and flyers designed to reach diverse ethnic groups. Monitoring of participation by minorities will continue to be included in the NYSOFA sub-grantee monitoring tool. If a SCSEP project is identified as under-serving minorities, a corrective action plan will be required, and training will be provided. NYSOFA will provide ongoing technical assistance and training to projects with specific focus placed on minority recruitment for both the participant and/or host agency to rectify and address any barriers to unsubsidized employment.

SCSEP projects will continue to recruit veterans in collaboration with the Black Veterans for Social Justice and Veterans Rehabilitation and Employment (VRE) representatives at Career Centers. Other veteran organizations such as Veterans Outreach Centers, VA Hospitals, and rotaries/auxiliaries are utilized to recruit SCSEP eligible veterans. Recruitment material and presentations are made available throughout local well-established community service networks, including AAA and other service delivery systems for those 60 and older. Other outreach efforts have been made toward assisting under-represented populations by coordinating with agencies that target low-income priority older adults, such as English as a second language training programs and agencies dedicated to serving minority populations. NYC Aging's SCSEP program will continue to target lower income neighborhood centers, homeless shelters, food pantries, organizations that work with clients recently released from incarceration, and public housing. In addition, faith-based organizations, long known for their outreach to underserved individuals, will also be part of the strategy to ensure that minority populations are included in SCSEP. A new organization was recently added, the Council of Peoples Organization, whose mission is to assist immigrant families, particularly individuals from South Asia and individuals who are Muslim, two groups that are traditionally most difficult to engage.

4. A LIST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE NEEDED AND THE PLACES WHERE THESE SERVICES ARE MOST NEEDED. SPECIFICALLY, THE PLAN MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LOCATION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS MOST IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE GROUPS WORKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. (20 CFR 641.330)

Community Services Most in Need

SCSEP projects were surveyed to identify the anticipated needs of SCSEP participants coupled with the locations of those community service groups working to meet those needs. The needs most identified for SCSEP participants include housing, nutrition, transportation, and an array of services designed to support self-sufficiency and independence. Additionally, many of the locations identified to meet those needs will also serve as host agency sites. Another need identified by NYC Aging will focus on SCSEP eligible individuals being released from prison. As mentioned previously, effective March 25, 2021, the 2020 reauthorization of the OAA added eligible individuals who have been incarcerated or are under supervision following release from prison or jail within the last five years as a priority population for enrollment and an additional category for most in need characteristics.

Below are samples of the organizations that responded to counties with SCSEP services.

Region 1 (Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond Counties):

- Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP);
- The Correctional Association of NY;
- NYC Department of Homeless Services;
- NYC Housing Authority;
- Andrew Jackson Senior Center;
- The Queens Center for Gay Seniors
- Asian Americans for Equality Center;
- Self-Help Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Senior Center;
- Sunnyside Older Adults Center Queens;

- NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (intergenerational initiative); and
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Region 2 (Rockland and Westchester Counties):

- White Plains Veteran Center;
- Commission for the Blind;
- Lexington Center for Recovery;
- Westchester Community College;
- Hope Community Services of New Rochelle,
- City of Yonkers; and
- Lifting Up Westchester.

Region 3 (Albany, Fulton, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties):

- Salvation Army of Saratoga;
- First Church of Albany;
- Boys and Girls Clubs;
- Troy Community Gardens; and
- Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Regions 4 & 5 (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties):

- The ARC of St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties;
- Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization;
- Watertown Urban Mission;
- Child Advocacy Center of Northern NY;
- Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Northern NY;
- St. Lawrence County Agency on Aging;
- North Country Prenatal Council;
- CREST Center;
- Potsdam Library;
- St. Lawrence County Arts Council;
- St. Lawrence County Health Initiative;
- Community Health Center of the North Country; and
- Catholic Charities of the North Country.

Region 6 (Tioga and Tompkins Counties):

- Broome Tioga BOCES; and
- Tompkins County Workforce Center.

Region 7 (Genesee, Monroe, Seneca, Wayne, and Yates Counties):

- ATTAIN Labs in Monroe County & Wyoming County;

- Rochester Educational Opportunity Center;
- Rochester Works;
- Action For a Better Community;
- Notre Dame Learning Center;
- Community Action of Wyoming County;
- Lifetime Assistance;
- Center for Disability Rights;
- Urban League of Rochester; and
- Rochester Libraries.

Region 8 (Chautauqua and Erie Counties):

- Buffalo Employment and Training Center;
- Community Action Organization;
- Catholic Charities of Western New York;
- Rural Outreach Center;
- Friends of the Night People;
- Olmstead Center for Sight;
- Buffalo Goodwill Store and Donation Center;
- Buffalo City Mission;
- Genesis Center;
- Read to Succeed;
- University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center;
- NYS Corrections and Community Supervision; and
- Northwest Mental Health Community.

The organizations provide community services in the places where the individuals who need those services are located. The services to be provided range from English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or other English as a second language classes, programs for formerly incarcerated, ATTAIN Labs or other sources of assistance in digital training, assistance with reading, assistance with health and wellness, transportation services, housing services, and any other services that the case managers think that the SCSEP participants can benefit from.

These organizations also simultaneously provide community services to and for SCSEP participants, are a source for outreach to potential SCSEP participants, especially, those individuals afforded priority service and are potential host site agencies that could lead to future employment for SCSEP participants.

5. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCSEP SERVICES, INCLUDING PLANNED LONG-TERM CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE, AND PLANNED CHANGES IN THE USE OF SCSEP GRANTEES AND PROGRAM OPERATORS TO BETTER ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT AS APPROPRIATE. (20 CFR 641.302(K))

Long Term Strategy to Improve State SCSEP Program

With encouragement from USDOL/ETA, between 2016 and 2017 a NYSOFA exploratory committee examined the design of the program. As a result of the committee's analysis of the structure of SCSEP in NYS, it was determined that regionalizing NYSOFA's SCSEP program would maximize efficiencies and resources, resulting in the optimization of opportunities for unsubsidized employment for SCSEP participants.

NYSOFA's SCSEP program was operated through a network of 29 AAA sub-grantees, who either directly provided or contracted out the program. Some of the county projects had only 3 authorized positions; these positions were then modified due to NYS's higher minimum wage than the federal minimum wage, resulting in programs having as few as two authorized positions. Due to the low number of authorized positions, staff overseeing these authorized positions were often responsible for other programs operated by the sponsoring agency, making it difficult for staff to become well-versed in the complex regulations and program requirements of SCSEP and give the program complete attention. Regionalizing was intended to result in efficiencies at both the state and local level in the operation of the program.

NYSOFA issued an RFA on January 25, 2018, that identified eight regions throughout NYS that contain State grantee authorized positions. Additionally, authorized positions were swapped with two different national grantees in order to create the regions. As a result of the RFA, beginning July 1, 2018, four SCSEP regional providers; A4TD, NYC Aging, PSC, and TWP were awarded five-year contracts, to be renewed annually, to provide the state SCSEP service in eight regions. (Attachment B: Regional Map, available on NYSOFA's website.

Regionalization has proven to provide an economy of scale for the programs. By being responsible for more authorized positions, staff can devote more time to SCSEP, resulting in a better understanding of the program requirements. The biggest program improvement, because of regionalization, has been the increased level of expertise and experience the sub-grantees bring to the NYS program. Six of the eight regions are operated by national grantees, who bring years of experience and a great understanding of how best to serve SCSEP participants. Additionally, there is more consistency across the state by having only eight programs instead of 29. NYSOFA is able to provide an increased level of technical assistance and an optimized level of attention to each sub-grantee. Monitoring and data validation occurs for all programs annually. Regionalization has improved administrative practices and has resulted in a better experience for participants and an increase in placements into unsubsidized employment.

Over the next four years NYSOFA will continue with the regional approach, conducting periodic RFAs. The usual timing of the RFA is five years, however, given the uncertainty of the timing of PY 2025 and the program's continuation in PY 2026, NYSOFA decided to keep the present regional sub-grantees until the future of SCSEP is determined.

The COVID-19 pandemic substantially affected SCSEP services delivery, with the closures of host agencies, job training and employment placements came to a halt. Even as the pandemic eased, and businesses began to open again SCSEP participants, sub-grantees, and grantees faced many challenges. However, many of the lessons learned during the pandemic also will serve as a guide for SCSEP going forward and acts as a blueprint for how to respond in any future disruption of SCSEP activities.

During the pandemic the guidance and flexibility that USDOL/ETA provided, such as extending individual durational limits by 12 months and using paid sick leave to minimize disruption to SCSEP participants were the backbone to allowing grantees to then figure out ways to continue training remotely and continue engaging with participants. Any disruptions of services in the future would have to begin in with this same guidance and flexibility.

Many of the strategies adopted as a response to the pandemic have been implemented as part of the SCSEP program currently and going forward. SCSEP bridges the digital divide older workers may experience compared to their younger counterparts by improving digital access through computer loaner and internet connectivity assistance. NYSOFA will continue to level this digital barrier through ATSS over the next four years. Additionally, SCSEP continues to provide training remotely through digital access to improve skills and job training activities. Some of the training provided through ATSS is credential training that provides the participant with certificates to present to employers as proof of their training. A hybrid method of in-person and remote training offers a greater exposure and diversity of training for SCSEP participants.

Another response to the pandemic that has been adopted and will be utilized going forward is new host site agencies and employer strategies. As so many host sites shut down or curbed on-site operations, one of the largest detriments to getting SCSEP back into on-site training was finding host sites that could provide the training. Strategies to develop new host agencies and employers needed to be implemented to find appropriate partners. Identifying employment sectors that may be in more demand, like health care or focusing on employers who are looking for those who can work remotely will provide greater opportunities for participants going forward.

Outreach and recruitment of SCSEP participants were also impacted by the pandemic, however, new strategies were developed that have paid off and will become part of the participant outreach and recruitment going forward. One such strategy is the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. All the sub-grantees had to adopt new strategies for marketing the program to participants and continue to utilize these methods of recruitment.

National grantees in NYS will continue to work cooperatively with NYSOFA, as they have in the past, regardless of which national grantees are chosen for NYS. Communications regarding overall SCSEP activities and WIOA subject matter will continue to be open with whomever is a national grantee serving older New Yorkers.

As detailed in the main body of the NYS Combined Plan, NYS has been working on an overall plan for all older adults in NYS that will positively impact SCSEP participants and other older workers not eligible for SCSEP services.

The NYS Master Plan for Aging

In November 2022, Governor Hochul issued Executive Order No. 23: Establishing the NYS Master Plan for Aging (MPA), to ensure that older adults and individuals of all ages can live healthy, fulfilling lives while aging with dignity and independence. To execute this order, the MPA's State Agency Council, led by the Department of Health (DOH) and NYSOFA, and Stakeholder Advisory Committee have brought together over 350 experts to address core issues of importance to all New Yorkers as they age. The needs of older workers are addressed in the Preliminary Advisory Report published on August 28, 2023, under the Organizing Pillar of Affordability of Basic Necessities. The MPA Final Report was issued on June 30, 2025.

6. THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FOR SCSEP PARTICIPANTS' ENTRY INTO UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND TO ACHIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE LEVELS SPECIFIED IN OAA SECTION 513(A)(2)(E)(II). (20 CFR 641.302(F))

Continuous Performance Improvement

The Plan's strategy over the next four years for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment will include a combination of ongoing technical assistance and training provided to sub-grantees. Given the continued impact the minimum wage has on the number of authorized positions available to SCSEP participants in NYS, projects will focus efforts on job development. This focus will facilitate the SCSEP participant's goal of obtaining unsubsidized employment and will provide authorized position openings for new participants.

Beginning in PY 2018, SCSEP grantees must follow the performance requirements from the Interim Final Rule (IFR) published on December 1, 2017, which revises the measures at 20 CFR 641.700, implementing the new performance requirements specified by the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2016. On July 30, 2018, USDOL/ETA issued a Final Rule adopting the IFR as final without change. The implementation of these new performance goals and targets has renewed focus on these performance measures.

In the past and presently, NYS has met or exceeded its performance goals. Now that the new data system, SCSEP Grantee Performance Management System (GPMS) has made the transition from the former data system, SCSEP Performance and Results QPR (SPARQ) and is fully operational; performance goals will be easier to trust and track, allowing grantees to utilize quarterly performance measures as a gauge of continuous performance improvement.

Additionally, over the next four years sub-grantees will be encouraged to utilize all sources of training (SCSEP virtual modules and live trainings) provided through USDOL/ETA related to improving performance as well as other aspects of SCSEP.

C. LOCATION AND POPULATION SERVED, INCLUDING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITIES AND POPULATIONS FOR WHICH PROJECTS OF THE TYPE AUTHORIZED BY TITLE V ARE MOST NEEDED. (20 CFR 641.325 (D))

Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution

Locations and Populations Most in Need

Attachment C, Population Figures and Percentage, available on the NYSOFA, details the New Yorkers aged 55 and older who earn 125% or less of federal Poverty Guidelines. There are approximately 1 million New Yorkers who are eligible for SCSEP. Of those:

- 61.05% are women and 38.95% are men;
- 57.5% are White; 25.31% are African American; 12.91% are Asian; 3.31% are other; and 0.96% are two or more races;
- 77.7% are non-Hispanic and 22.3% are Hispanic.
- 72.8% are native born; 12.7% are naturalized; and 14.5% are non-citizen.

- 29.45% did not complete high school; 38.58% completed high school/GED; 6.94% have some college, but no degree; 5.82% have an associate degree; 10.57% have a bachelor's degree; and 8.64% have higher than a bachelor's degree;
- 39.18% have a disability, and
- 3.76% are Veterans.

2. LIST THE CITIES AND COUNTIES WHERE THE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF SCSEP AUTHORIZED POSITIONS AND INDICATE WHERE THE POSITIONS CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

Counties of SCSEP Projects

Attachment D, located on the NYSOFA website, details the PY 2023 Geographic Areas to be Served – Areas Affected by Project. The number of assigned SCSEP authorized positions are based on USDOL/ETA's distribution factor, which serves as the foundation for equitable assignment of SCSEP positions. USDOL/ETA uses census data by county and annual program appropriations to calculate the allocation of authorized positions for each county in the state. The number of authorized positions is proportional to the number of eligible people in the county compared to the eligible state population.

Included in Attachment D, PY 2023, is the listing by county of the number of SCSEP authorized positions. There were incremental changes from PY 2022, however, there were changes from PY 2017 because of position swaps with national grantee, A4TD that were negotiated in order to construct the eight state SCSEP regions. It is important to highlight the history of the swap.

Table 4. details the Authorized Positions exchanged between NYS and A4TD to establish the eight NYS SCSEP Regions.

Table 4. Authorized Positions change between NYS and A4TD to make eight State SCSEP Regions.

PY 2017 AP			Swap Proposal			PY 2017 Post Swap AP		
County	**State**	**A4TD**	**County**	**State**	**A4TD**	**County**	**State**	**A4TD**
St. Lawrence	3	13	St. Lawrence	13	-13	St. Lawrence	16	0
Jefferson	3	9	Jefferson	9	-9	Jefferson	12	0
Tompkins	3	5	Tompkins	5	-5	Tompkins	8	0
Seneca	0	5	Seneca	5	-5	Seneca	5	0
Onondaga	10	40	Onondaga	-10	10	Onondaga	0	50
Cortland	3	3	Cortland	-3	3	Cortland	0	6
Oneida	5	26	Oneida	-5	5	Oneida	0	31
Wyoming	3	2	Wyoming	-3	3	Wyoming	0	5
Niagara	4	24	Niagara	-4	4	Niagara	0	28
Ontario	3	7	Ontario	-3	3	Ontario	0	10

Sullivan	4	0		Sullivan	-4	4		Sullivan	0	4
Total	**41**	**134**		**Total**	**0**	**0**		**Total**	**41**	**134**
				64 NYS slots swapped						

3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

Current Slot Imbalances

Table 5. below contains data taken from USDOL/ETA's sponsored Grantee Performance Management System (GPMS) Equitable Distribution Reports section, which lists the authorized positions by County in the NYSOFA SCSEP project and compares the variance between modified positions (based on NYS's minimum wage) and enrolled positions as of December 31, 2025.

Table 5. Enrollment Variance (PY 2025 in the 1st Quarter July 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025*)*

New York County	*Authorized Positions*	*Modified Positions*	*Enrolled Positions*	*Variance*	*Variance %*
Albany	9	4	11	7	175%
Bronx	72	32	12	-20	-62.5%
Chautauqua	4	2	0	-2	-100%
Clinton	9	4	2	-2	-50%
Erie	27	13	11	-2	-15.4%
Essex	5	2	1	-1	-50%
Franklin	7	3	5	2	-66.7%
Fulton	4	2	0	-2	-100%
Genesee	3	1	1	0	0%
Jefferson	12	6	10	4	66.7%
Kings	101	48	42	-6	-12.5%
Lewis	4	2	0	-2	-100%
Monroe	17	8	9	1	12.5%
New York	65	29	25	-4	-13.8%
Queens	86	39	30	-9	-23.1%
Rensselaer	5	2	3	1	50%
Richmond	14	6	1	-5	-83.4%
Rockland	5	2	0	-2	-100%
St. Lawrence	14	7	2	-5	71.5%
Saratoga	4	2	0	-2	-100%
Schenectady	5	2	2	0	0%
Seneca	5	2	0	-2	-100%
Tioga	6	3	0	-3	-100%
Tompkins	7	3	7	4	133.3%
Wayne	4	2	0	-2	-100%
Westchester	34	15	13	-2	-13.4%
Yates	3	1	0	-1	-100%
TOTAL	531	242	187	-55	-22.7%

NYS's minimum wage continues to present a challenge for all SCSEP projects in the state. The ongoing impact of the pandemic has presented some issues with both getting host agencies prepared to bring on SCSEP participants and the recruitment of new participants in some counties. It is also the goal of each program to bring any under enrollment in balance by the end of the PY. In some SCSEP projects that are over enrolled, adjustments in the number of community service hours were decreased in order to keep the project within equitably distributed funding.

NYSOFA will continue to monitor enrollment levels via GPMS Equitable Distribution function. Sub-grantees that are over enrolled are required to contact NYSOFA with a plan to remedy over enrollment. The preferred method of solving over enrollment is to have staff focus participants on achieving employment. Similarly, subgrantees with under enrollment issues are encouraged to expand outreach efforts.

NYSOFA works with National Grantees, especially during Equitable Distribution reporting periods to discuss enrollment issues and whether any swapping of authorized positions would be helpful in achieving Equitable Distribution. The time frame coming out of the pandemic have called for more of a holding pattern while SCSEP projects get back to having more opened host sites. As noted previously, NYSOFA has negotiated authorized position swaps with national grantees. Over the next four years, as a new normal is established, NYSOFA will be willing to discuss authorized position exchanges, if all agreed it would have an impact on any enrollment imbalance.

4. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SCSEP POSITIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT:

A. MOVES POSITIONS FROM OVER-SERVED TO UNDERSERVED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH 20 CFR 641.365.

Long Term State Strategy for Equitable Distribution of SCSEP Positions

Moving Positions from Over-Served to Underserved Locations

NYSOFA plans to continue to work with all SCSEP National grantees operating in NYS on equitable distribution of SCSEP slots. This will provide an opportunity for any issues surrounding equitable distribution to be cooperatively resolved between both state and National grantees. Through continued review of slot distribution, NYSOFA, in consultation with NYS National grantees and the approval of USDOL/ETA, will determine if moving slots between sponsors and/or counties will be necessary.

B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

Equitable Service in Urban and Rural Areas

The Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas:

- Urbanized Areas (UAs) of 50,000 or more people;
- Urban Clusters (UCs) of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.

"Rural" encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area.

NYS is a combination of highly populated counties (NYC – 100% urban) and sparsely populated counties (Hamilton County – 100% rural). The goal of equitable distribution is to ensure that all areas

of the state are served in an equitable manner. NYS's regional sub-grantee approach provides sub-grantees that have experience and expertise in providing SCSEP services in the counties they serve. Sub-grantees that are familiar with the area's labor market and how to effectively reach potential SCSEP participants in that area, provide the most equitable outcome opportunities for SCSEP participants and local business.

Table 6. below shows the rural population ages 55 and over and percentage of population for each county in NYS. The source is the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2020, Demographic and Housing Characteristics, Table P12 and American Community Survey 2021 5-year Sample Table B01001

Table 6. NYS Rural Population Ages 55 and over by County

COUNTY NAME	*TOTAL POP.*	*URBAN POP.*	*% URBAN*	*RURAL POP.*	*% RURAL*
Albany	95,347	83,663	87.7	11,684	12.3
Allegany	15,589	2,011	12.9	13,578	87.1
Bronx	360,075	360,075	100.0	0	0.0
Broome	66,191	47,156	71.2	19,035	28.8
Cattaraugus	26,609	8,870	33.3	17,739	66.7
Cayuga	26,784	10,163	37.9	16,621	62.1
Chautauqua	45,336	23,503	51.8	21,833	48.2
Chemung	28,415	20,335	71.6	8,080	28.4
Chenango	17,401	2,166	12.4	15,235	87.6
Clinton	25,557	7,968	31.2	17,589	68.8
Columbia	25,285	3,600	14.2	21,685	85.8
Cortland	13,931	6,080	43.6	7,851	56.4
Delaware	18,566	1,540	8.0	17,026	92.0
Dutchess	97,859	61,651	63.0	36,208	37.0
Erie	308,106	296,604	87.5	38,502	12.5
Essex	15,233	2,071	13.6	13,162	86.4
Franklin	15,141	3,492	23.1	11,649	76.9
Fulton	18,710	8,006	42.8	10,704	57.2
Genesee	20,116	6,822	33.9	13,294	66.1
Greene	18,478	4,075	22.1	14,403	77.9
Hamilton	2,623	0	0.00	2,623	100.0
Herkimer	21,991	9,542	43.4	12,449	56.6
Jefferson	29,331	9,963	34.0	19,368	66.0
Kings	687,602	687,602	100.0	0	0.0
Lewis	9,294	0	0.0	9,294	100.0
Livingston	20,684	4,059	19.6	16,625	80.4
Madison	23,550	6,980	29.6	16,570	70.4
Monroe	237,182	213,758	90.1	23,424	9.9
Montgomery	16,190	8,199	50.6	7,992	49.4
Nassau	448,588	446,237	99.5	2,350	0.5
New York	473,064	473,064	100.0	0	0.0
Niagara	74,692	50,385	67.5	24,307	32.5
Oneida	76,222	46,948	61.6	29,274	38.4

Onondaga	148,824	121,133	81.5	27,494	18.5
Ontario	39,884	19,911	49.9	19,973	50.1
Orange	106,937	70,870	66.3	36,067	33.7
Orleans	13,841	3,679	26.6	10,162	73.4
Oswego	37,556	11,975	31.9	25,581	68.1
Otsego	21,297	3,867	18.2	17,430	81.8
Putnam	33,025	20,627	62.5	12,398	37.5
Queens	704,464	704,430	100.0	34	0.0
Rensselaer	51,105	31,651	61.9	19,454	38.1
Richmond	149,331	149,331	100.0	0	0.0
Rockland	92,981	92,519	99.5	462	0.5
St. Lawrence	34,312	8,663	25.2	25,649	74.8
Saratoga	77,994	54,520	69.9	23,474	30.1
Schenectady	48,774	43,318	88.8	5,456	11.2
Schoharie	11,421	1,559	13.7	9,862	86.3
Schuyler	6,844	0	0.0	6,844	100.0
Seneca	11,667	4,953	42.5	6,714	57.5
Steuben	32,643	12,170	37.3	20,473	62.7
Suffolk	484,504	472,375	97.5	12,129	2.5
Sullivan	26,509	4,948	18.7	21,561	81.3
Tioga	17,822	5,936	33.3	11,886	66.7
Tompkins	27,402	11,044	40.3	16,358	59.7
Ulster	64,655	25,392	39.3	39,263	60.7
Warren	25,436	15,765	62.0	9,671	38.0
Washington	21,722	4,330	19.9	17,389	80.1
Wayne	31,949	7,091	22.2	24,858	77.8
Westchester	308,714	291,996	94.9	16,718	5.4
Wyoming	13,567	829	6.1	12,738	93.9
Yates	8,915	2,925	32.8	5,990	67.2
TOTAL	6,033,837	5,0875,595	84.3%	946,242	15.7%

NYSOFA's strategy for serving urban and rural areas is to utilize sub-grantees that have experience in providing SCSEP services in those particular areas. The SCSEP sub-grantees have community relationships in these areas, whether rural or urban, and understand the specific needs and opportunities in their area.

Sub-grantees will utilize community-based organizations, faith-based, state and local government agencies, in particular County AAAs, and other local transportation services unique to their community. Beside transportation services, these organizations also provide relationships that can lead to outreach to potential SCSEP participants, host site training, and other supportive services.

A service that is critical in both rural and urban areas is transportation. Through the approval of the ATSS funding option, NYSOFA will continue to assist in both rural and urban transportation by purchasing bus passes, rideshares, and occasional car repairs. In New York City, Metro Cards will be purchased to enable participants to overcome transportation barriers.

Paying transportation costs to and from training allows people to engage in training activities which they would otherwise be unable to access. This is particularly important for new enrollees, in the first weeks of training, before they have yet received any wages. This service will eliminate the barrier of a participant being unable to afford transportation to a location where training occurs. With transportation assistance, participants will be able to fully participate in their training and be better prepared to obtain unsubsidized employment.

C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)

Individuals Afforded Priority of Service

The OAA sec. 518(b) requires that eligible individuals who meet the criteria in the chart below, shall have priority for community service employment and other authorized activities provided by SCSEP.

The chart below details those priority individuals who qualify based on one or more of the following criteria as well as the estimated number of older New Yorkers who meet the criteria.

Population Groups	*New York Residents*
Age 65 +	3,564,596*
Have a disability (65+)	1,125,145*
Have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills (55+)	517,340**
Below from 2020 Census: **	
Reside in rural areas (55+)	885,365
Are veterans or their spouses who meet the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act (65+)	577,702
Have low employment prospects (55+)	210,455
Have failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title 1 of WIOA	Unknown
Are homeless or at risk for homelessness	Unknown
Are individuals formerly incarcerated	Unknown

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022 One Year Estimates

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020

NYSOFA was unable to find reliable data on the population groups listed as unknown.

Strategies to best serve priority populations mainly rely on community partnerships. The sub-grantees will continue to utilize relationships with community partners such as community-based, faith-based, and governmental organizations that serve SCSEP priority populations. Community partnerships can be the source of outreach to SCSEP priority individuals, serve as a host training site, serve as potential employers, and also provide supportive services to assist in relieving obstacles to employment.

The overall strategy is to combine employment-focused training and development with a variety of wrap-around supportive services that will assist priority populations in successful employment outcomes. The supportive services can be as diverse as the community itself, ranging from transportation, dental or eye-care, other health related assistance (mental or substance abuse treatment), appropriate clothing, housing, and any other appropriate community service that can assist with positive outcomes for these individuals.

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

For the ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the state, see:

- Attachment E: New York State Counties: Population Aged 55 and Over, 125% of Poverty, Minority and Rural on the NYSOFA website; and
- Attachment F: New York State Counties: Population Aged 55 and Over by Race and Ethnicity on the NYSOFA website..

6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

C. ARE MINORITIES

D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

For the relative distribution of eligible individuals, see

- Attachment E: New York State Counties: Population Aged 55 and Over, 125% of Poverty, Minority and Rural on the NYSOFA website; and
- Attachment F: New York State Counties: Population Aged 55 and Over by Race and Ethnicity on the NYSOFA website.

New York State
Age by Ability to Speak English for the Population 60 Years and Over

	Speak English "not well"	
	Estimate	MoE90*
New York State	298,135	5,015
Albany County	1,180	257
Allegany County	20	35
Bronx County	37,445	1,763
Broome County	525	174
Cattaraugus County	110	57
Cayuga County	140	80
Chautauqua County	300	120
Chemung County	64	51
Chenango County	44	37
Clinton County	49	34
Columbia County	135	71
Cortland County	14	31
Delaware County	39	42
Dutchess County	1,275	287
Erie County	2,690	369
Essex County	12	14
Franklin County	34	41
Fulton County	24	42
Genesee County	35	46

F. FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, AS DEFINED IN TEGL 17-20

The reauthorization of the OAA of 2020 amended statutory requirements to provide priority of service and an additional category of individuals with barriers to employment for eligible individuals

who have been incarcerated within the last five years. However, the Individual Duration Limit (IDL) extension policy will not change to include those individuals.

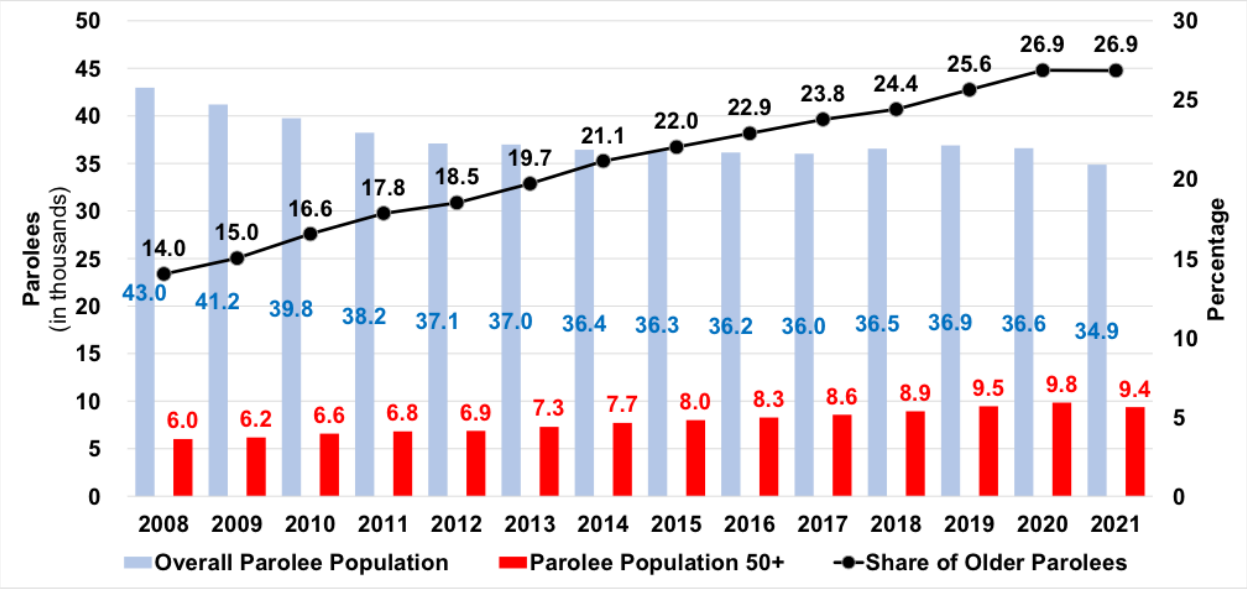
(See current policy attached as Attachment I, 17-PI-11 on the NYSOFA website.

Service priority is given to individuals meeting one or more of the following criteria:

1. Is a veteran or a spouse of a veteran;
2. Is 65 years of age or older;
3. Has a disability;
4. Has limited English proficiency;
5. Has low literacy skills;
6. Resides in a rural area;
7. Has low employment prospects;
8. Has failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title I of WIOA;
9. Is homeless or at risk for homelessness; or
10. Is formerly incarcerated or on supervision from release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination. (Effective March 25, 2021, the 2020 reauthorization of the OAA added this tenth characteristic category that has priority of service over those individuals who meet only the basic eligibility criteria related to age, income, and employment.)

The number and the percentage of older individuals released from the State prison system to parole supervision under Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) jurisdiction have also been rising, as shown in the graph below.

NYS Parolees under DOCCS Community Supervision, 2008-2021



7. A DESCRIPTION OF THE STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID DISRUPTIONS TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN POSITIONS ARE REDISTRIBUTED, AS PROVIDED IN 20 CFR 641.365; WHEN NEW CENSUS OR OTHER RELIABLE DATA BECOME AVAILABLE; OR WHEN THERE IS OVER-ENROLLMENT FOR ANY OTHER REASON. (20 CFR 641.325(I), 641.302(B))

Steps to Avoid Disruptions in Staffing

NYS will allow for a gradual shift in positions as they become vacant to areas where there has been an increase in the eligible population. This does not mean that participants will be entitled to remain in subsidized community service positions indefinitely. All steps will be taken to promote transition to unsubsidized employment.

Grantees and sub-grantees will have to notify NYSOFA before any transfer of positions from one geographic area to another. If NYSOFA concurs with the transfer of positions, NYSOFA will then submit, in writing, the proposed changes in distribution that occur after submission of the equitable distribution report to SCSEP National and the Federal Project Officer for approval. All grantees are required to coordinate any proposed changes in position distribution with the national grantees that operate in the state, including the State Project Director, before submitting the proposed changes to SCSEP National and the Federal Project Officer for approval. The request to SCSEP National for approval will include the comments of the State Project Director.

SCSEP ASSURANCES

State and Area Agencies on Aging

A link to the draft SCSEP Plan prepared by NYSOFA was forwarded to the 23 participating local AAAs and to all local SCSEP program directors via e-mail for comment. The draft plan was posted on the NYSOFA public website for public comment.

State and Local Boards under WIOA

The draft plan was posted on NYSDOL's website. Additionally, NYSDOL provided State and LWDB members with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Plan.

Public and private nonprofit agencies and organizations providing employment services, including each grantee operating a SCSEP project within the state

All national grantees were contacted to comment and provide recommendations on the Plan.

Social service organizations providing services to older individuals

Many social service organizations in NYS are actively involved with SCSEP as host agencies. In transmitting the draft Plan, local program operators were directed to inform host agencies and other social service organizations that the Plan was available for comment on the NYSOFA website.

Affected communities

Both the NYSDOL and NYSOFA websites are designed to reach and inform the general public, in addition to the populations both agencies serve. Each website has general information about their relevant subject areas on employment and aging. This ensured an extensive review of the draft Plan by the general public in the grantee service areas.

Unemployed older individuals

NYSOFA and the national grantees network of SCSEP providers were encouraged to share the draft Plan with the organizations they contract with and to make the draft Plan accessible for trainees within their program.

Community-based organizations serving older individuals

All grantees were asked to share the draft Plan with community-based organizations that are or have been SCSEP host agencies. NYSOFA sub-grantees were encouraged to share the draft Plan with program participants and other community groups serving older adults.

Business and Labor organizations

Businesses, labor organizations, and the general population that NYSOFA or the grantees and sub-grantees have contact with were encouraged to comment on the Plan.

APPENDIX 1: PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Include the state's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth

TITLE I – ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Title I – Adult Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.5%		66.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,950		$8,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	58.0%		58.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0%		61.5%	

TITLE I – DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Title I – Dislocated Worker Program

	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	64.5%		65.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.5%		66.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,750		$7,850	
Credential Attainment Rate	56.0%		56.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	55.0%		55.5%	

TITLE I – YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Title I – Youth Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$3,700		$3,800	
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0%		57.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	52.0%		52.5%	

TITLE II – ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	36%		37%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	32%		33%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$5,970		$6,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	51%		52%	
Measurable Skill Gains	53.5%		55%	

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT – WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	68.0%		68.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	69.0%		69.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$7,800		$7,900	

Credential Attainment Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (NYSED/ACCES-VR)

	Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation Program – NYSED/ACCES-VR			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$6,000		$6,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (OCFS/NYSCB)

	Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation Program – OCFS/NYSCB			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	42%		45%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$6,000		$6,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	55%		59%	
Measurable Skill Gains	68%		72%	

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	All WIOA Core Programs			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	69.0%		70.0%	

OTHER APPENDICES (TITLE II)

Table 2: FY 2022-2023 and FY 2024-2025 NRS-Approved Adult Education Targets		
Instructional Type & Level	NYS 2022-2023 Targets	Proposed NYS 2024-2025 Targets
ABE – Beginning Literacy	51%	52%
ABE – Beginning Basic Education	68%	59%
ABE – Intermediate Low	37%	55%
ABE – Intermediate High	44%	49%
ASE – Low	53%	54%
ASE – High	26%	51%
ESL – Beginning Literacy	52%	50%
ESL – Beginning Low	57%	51%
ESL – Beginning High	54%	54%
ESL – Intermediate Low	51%	56%

ESL – Intermediate High	43%	54%
ESL – Advanced	38%	53%