

NEW MEXICO

Workforce Innovation and
Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Combined State Plan

Program Years 2024-2027

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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

[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.

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,
 - 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. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission, if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

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.

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

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 plan

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined 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.)

Yes

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.)

Yes

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

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham is dedicated to making New Mexico the best state in the union for children to grow and thrive. Workforce development is a key part of achieving this goal because children succeed when they have the economic stability that comes from the efforts of a strong, supported workforce. Workforce development builds vibrant and healthy communities, contributes to sustainable economic initiatives, aids businesses of all sizes, and helps individuals find meaningful and sustaining opportunities.

Four significant dynamics in our state shaped the 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan. First, the COVID-19 global pandemic changed the way we think about work and workplaces. Second, the state faced an inverted labor market with over 30,000 more vacancies than unemployed people looking for work in 2023. Third, Governor Lujan Grisham's bold educational initiatives, including the Opportunity Scholarship that provides tuition-free college and the Early Childhood Education and Care Fund that endowed accessible early childhood services, opened a world of possibilities to many New Mexicans. Finally, billions of dollars of infrastructure investment will require a skilled workforce. Each one of these is a historical first. The combination of all of four factors creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve the lives of all New Mexicans.

To capitalize on this unique moment, the New Mexico Department of Work Solutions hosted a series of facilitated meetings with core programs, combined partners and key stakeholders on the development of the State's visions, goals, and strategies for the State Plan. The regional input sessions included participants state and local workforce development board members, Chief Elected Officials, regional service providers, business representatives, higher educational institutions, workers' rights organizations, organized labor, and community advocates. We assembled our local workforce board executive directors, One-Stop Operators, and Title I service providers for in-depth discussions. Additionally, NMDWS hosted multiple virtual public input sessions, providing an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to contribute to the development of the State workforce system's vision, goals and strategies. The State Workforce Development Board participated in all of these opportunities and reviewed the final plan. By the end of the stakeholder engagement process, over 375 people representing diverse communities and interests had shared their ideas and contributed to this Plan.

The result of this comprehensive participatory process is a marked departure from the WIOA State Plans of the past. While continuing to align to the state's forward-looking economic development goals, this Plan emphasizes the immediate needs of New Mexico communities to build and improve infrastructure and to take care of each other. The plan also recognizes that the rapidly changing nature of work – both with advancements in technology and the emergence of new industries – means that we need to prepare our workforce for a future we cannot fully envision yet. We prioritized reaching populations in our state that are less engaged in the labor force, while also recognizing that the workforce system needs to be part of larger efforts to attract more people to New Mexico.

Stakeholders were clear that our workforce system has tremendous potential and many amazing programs, but suffers from fragmentation and a lack of communication. This plan includes cross-goal and alignment strategies that will enable stronger case management, more coordinated business engagement, and strengthened partnerships with education and training providers.

The State Workforce Development Board is committed to overseeing the implementation and monitoring the progress of the strategies set forth in this plan. All of the partners in the workforce system have committed to ensuring that the collaborative engagement that went into developing this plan is just the beginning of a new era of working together for a better New Mexico.

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 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 and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

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

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

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

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.

i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

The Department of Workforce Solutions Economic Research and Analysis Bureau undertook the assessment of the state's industry and occupational demand through an analysis of existing data, including current employment trends, industry, and occupational projections, worker credentialing, and feedback from the state's employers. From the beginning of Governor Lujan Grisham's Administration in January 2019 to June 2023, New Mexico added approximately 34,500 net jobs, with all gains occurring in the private sector (up 34,800 jobs, or 5.3 percent). Although the state's rate of total job growth (4.1 percent) was less than that of the nation (6.1 percent), New Mexico's rate of private sector job growth outpaced by the U.S. (7.1 percent vs. 5.3 percent, respectively).

The largest occupational group in New Mexico was office and administrative support, with a 14.2 percent share of total employment, for a total of 116,000 jobs. With 76,580 jobs, food preparation and serving related was the next largest occupational group, with an employment share of 9.4 percent. Other large occupational groups include sales and related (8.2 percent), transportation and material moving (7.5 percent), healthcare support (6.6 percent), construction and extraction (6.5 percent), and education, training, and library (6.0 percent).

ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

At the outset, this Plan recognizes that traditional employment projections may not keep pace with the rapidly changing economy of New Mexico. By virtue of their methodology, the projections discussed in this section do not take into account massive investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure that began in 2020 and continue to the current time. They also do not consider the emergence of new industries, such as alternative energy and advanced

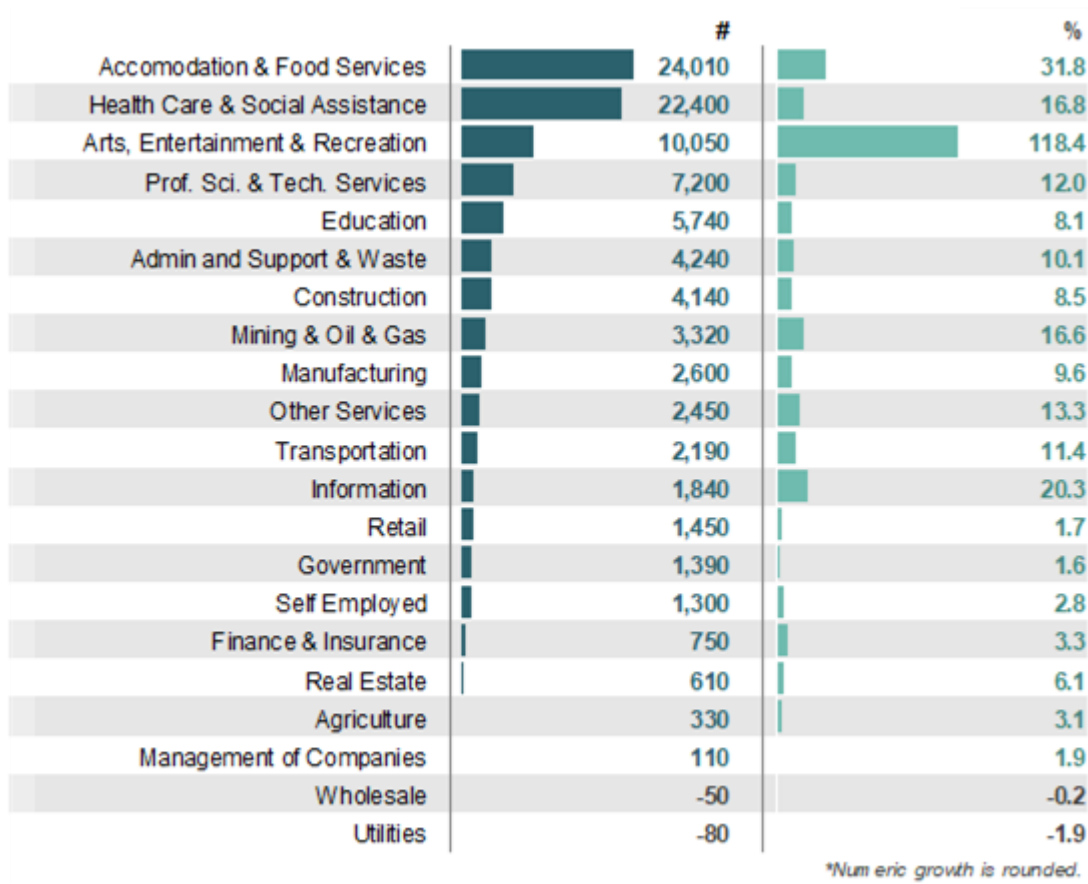
manufacturing. That said, these projections do follow the historical methodology of the New Mexico WIOA State Plan and are helpful from that perspective.

New Mexico's 2020 employment of 828,630 is projected to grow to 924,610 by 2030. This increase represents an additional 95,980 jobs and 11.6 percent growth. (Estimates, projection, and numeric growth are rounded.) As shown in [Exhibit 1](#), of the state's four workforce regions, the Northern Region is projected to experience the highest percentage growth (13.0 percent). Growth in the Santa Fe Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA, 14.4 percent) is anticipated to be the primary driver of that region's growth. The MSA also has the highest projected percentage growth of the state's four MSAs. The largest numeric growth is, unsurprisingly, anticipated to occur in the state's most populated region (Central) and MSA (Albuquerque). Percentage growth in the Eastern region is equal to growth statewide. The Southwestern Region trails with growth of 10.9 percent.

		2020	2030	#	%
New Mexico		828,630	924,610	95,980	11.6%
REGIONS	Central Region	381,180	424,350	43,170	11.3%
	Eastern Region	136,200	151,990	15,790	11.6%
	Northern Region	182,530	206,330	23,800	13.0%
	Southwestern Region	98,920	109,750	10,830	10.9%
MSAs	Albuquerque	381,180	424,350	43,170	11.3%
	Farmington	44,170	49,120	4,950	11.2%
	Las Cruces	74,640	82,220	7,580	10.2%
	Santa Fe	56,750	64,930	8,180	14.4%

**Employment, projected employment, and numeric growth are rounded.*

As illustrated in [Exhibit 2](#), about half of all projected employment growth is anticipated to occur in just three industry sectors—accommodation and food services (24,010 jobs, or 31.8 percent growth), health care and social assistance (22,400 jobs, or 16.8 percent growth), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (10,050 jobs, or 118.4 percent growth). The percentage growth of these three sectors exceeds the all-industry average of 11.6 percent. Four other sectors have percentage growth above the all-industry average, including professional, scientific, and technical services (7,200 jobs, or 12.0 percent), mining and oil and gas extraction (3,320 jobs, or 16.6 percent), other services (2,450 jobs, or 13.3 percent), and information (1,840 jobs, or 20.3 percent). Two sectors are projected to see a decline in employment, wholesale trade (50 jobs, or 0.2 percent) and utilities (80 jobs, or 1.9 percent).



The top three industry sectors projected to grow the most and the top three projected to grow the fastest are, for the most part, the same across all four regions and MSAs. Health care and social assistance and accommodation and food services are among the three sectors to grow the most in all substate areas ([Exhibit 3](#)). Accommodation and food services is joined by arts, entertainment, and recreation to be among the three fastest-growing industry sectors in all substate areas ([Exhibit 4](#)).

MOST GROWTH			FASTEST GROWTH (%)		
Albuquerque*					
Health Care & Social Assistance		11,160		118.5	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Accommodation & Food Services		10,250		30.4	Accommodation & Food Services
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation		4,280		16.7	Health Care & Social Assistance
Farmington					
Health Care & Social Assistance		1,230		103.9	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Accommodation & Food Services		1,040		27.3	Accommodation & Food Services
Mining & Oil & Gas Extraction		550		18.7	Information
Las Cruces					
Health Care & Social Assistance		2,540		110.3	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Accommodation & Food Services		1,640		26.6	Accommodation & Food Services
Educational Services		780		17.3	Other Services
Santa Fe					
Accommodation & Food Services		2,580		128.5	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation		1,990		35.1	Accommodation & Food Services
Health Care & Social Assistance		1,350		21.4	Manufacturing
*Albuquerque MSA is the same as Central Region. ** represents data that are suppressed. Numeric growth is rounded.					

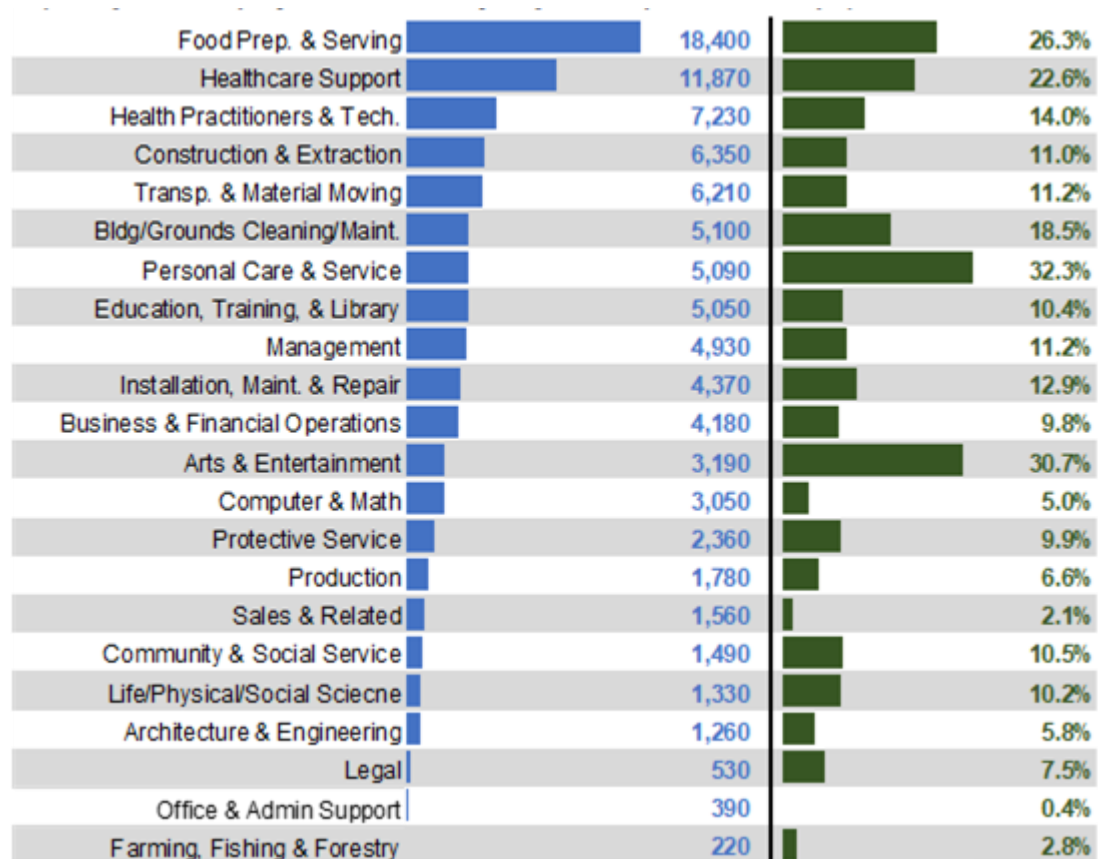
*Albuquerque MSA is the same as Central Region. *** represents data that are suppressed. Numeric growth is rounded.

MOST GROWTH			FASTEST GROWTH (%)		
Central*					
Health Care & Social Assistance		11,160		118.5	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Accommodation & Food Services		10,250		30.4	Accommodation & Food Services
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation		4,280		16.7	Health Care & Social Assistance
Eastern					
Accommodation & Food Services		4,540		117.0	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Health Care & Social Assistance		2,780		33.2	Accommodation & Food Services
Mining & Oil & Gas Extraction		2,350		18.4	Mining & Oil & Gas Extraction
Northern					
Accommodation & Food Services		6,680		120.0	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Health Care & Social Assistance		4,860		34.9	Accommodation & Food Services
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation		3,900		16.9	Information
Southwestern					
Health Care & Social Assistance		3,320		111.3	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Accommodation & Food Services		2,470		28.7	Accommodation & Food Services
Educational Services		1,070		17.0	Health Care & Social Assistance
*Central Region is the same as Albuquerque MSA. ** represents data that are suppressed. Numeric growth is rounded.					

*Central Region is the same as Albuquerque MSA. *** represents data that are suppressed. Numeric growth is rounded.

Exhibit 5 illustrates projected employment growth by major occupational group in New Mexico. Employment growth is defined as the number of positions that are completely new and have not been filled by a worker who previously left the occupation. Employment in food preparation and serving is projected to grow the most, by 18,400 jobs, making up over one-fifth of total statewide growth. Food preparation and serving also have the third fastest growth, at 26.3 percent, a rate over two times that of the statewide average of 11.6 percent. The occupational group with the fastest growth was personal care and service, at 32.3 percent, with jobs increasing by 5,090. Two other major occupational groups with large growth include healthcare support related (11,870 jobs) and healthcare practitioners and technical (7,230 jobs).

Employment in the occupational groups of farming, fishing, and forestry is projected to have the smallest increase of 220 jobs by 2030. Office and administrative support is expected to have minimal growth as well (390 jobs, or 0.4 percent), but with current employment, it is the second largest of any other occupational group in the state (about 111,320 in 2020).



Not only are employment opportunities created by growth, but job openings also arise when workers need to be replaced because they leave the occupation to enter a different occupation (also called transfers) or because workers leave the occupation and exit the labor force (also called exits). The total annual number of job openings equals the sum of growth, transfers, and exits.

As seen in [Exhibit 6](#), the food preparation and serving related major occupational group is projected to have the most annual job openings in the state due to transfers and exits (14,200 jobs). When this figure is combined with growth openings, the food preparation and serving related major occupational group will have the most annual job openings (16,040 jobs). Although minimal job growth is expected in office and administrative support, this occupational group will have the second-largest number of total annual job openings (12,350 jobs) because of the large number leaving the occupation (12,310). Other occupational groups expected to have minimal job growth are legal (50 jobs) and farming, fishing, and forestry (20 jobs). Legal is expected to have the least number of job openings due to transfers and exits (470 jobs).

	Annual Job Openings Due To Growth	Annual Job Openings Due to Transfers & Exits	TOTAL
Food Prep. & Serving	1,840	14,200	16,040
Office & Admin. Support	40	12,310	12,350
Sales & Related	160	10,320	10,480
Healthcare Support	1,190	7,030	8,220
Transp. & Material Moving	620	7,320	7,940
Construction & Extraction	640	6,120	6,760
Education, Training & Library	510	4,470	4,980
Bldg/Grounds Cleaning/Maint.	510	3,900	4,410
Management	490	3,740	4,230
Business & Financial Ops.	420	3,730	4,150
Installation, Maint. & Repair	440	3,430	3,870
Health Practitioners & Tech.	720	2,980	3,700
Production	180	3,090	3,270
Personal Care & Service	510	2,560	3,070
Protective Service	240	2,770	3,010
Architecture & Engineering	130	1,670	1,800
Computer & Mathematical	310	1,370	1,680
Community & Social Service	150	1,450	1,600
Arts, Design, Entertainment	320	1,180	1,500
Life/Physical/Social Science	130	1,190	1,320
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	20	1,250	1,270
Legal	50	470	520

Nu m e r i c o p e n i n g s a r e r o u n d e d .

iii. Employers' Employment Needs

To determine employers' needs, in addition to labor market information, we examined both quantitative and qualitative data. Stakeholder collaboration and comment were also critical inputs. We partnered with agencies across the State. This section incorporates data from the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, the New Mexico Health Care Workforce Committee Annual Report, the Department of Health, the Human Services Department, and the Economic Development Department.

Occupational and Industry projections also provide a critical component for assessing New Mexico employers' needs, but they do not assess the current demand for workers. Information for current needs can be obtained through analyses of online job postings. Based on information available through the advertised jobs data from the Workforce Connection Online System, online advertised vacancies in New Mexico averaged 90,000 per month in the most recent 12-month period, or an average of 2.6 advertised job listings per unemployed worker.

To build a thriving and healthy economy for all New Mexicans, the WIOA State Plan identified the following employer needs:

- Growing the workforce that supports safe and healthy New Mexican families and communities

- Growing the workforce to modernize New Mexico’s infrastructure, and
- Developing a workforce system that anticipates and prepares the workforce for changes in the New Mexican economy.

Employers needs for a workforce that supports safe and healthy New Mexican families and communities entail focusing on the following sectors: healthcare providers, behavioral health providers, early childhood workforce, and first responders.

Healthcare Providers (Including Behavioral Health)

The Health Care and Social Assistance sector comprises establishments providing health care and social assistance for individuals. The sector includes both health care and social assistance, because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of these two activities. The industries included here, and in the next section, provide a continuum of health care and social assistance. Establishments in these fields deliver services by trained professionals. All industries in the sector share this commonality of process, namely, labor inputs of health practitioners or social workers with the requisite expertise. Many of the industries in the sector are defined based on the educational degree held by the practitioners included in the industry.

The industry with the largest number of job openings was in healthcare (22.5 percent of the total), followed by professional, scientific, and technical services (17.0 percent) and educational services (14.5 percent).

The occupational group with the largest number of job openings by far was also healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (32.1 percent). Since 2012 the average number of advertised online job postings for registered nurses has consistently been over 2,000 a month ([Exhibit 7](#)). The most recent month of data shows there were over 6,500 advertised job postings for registered nurses. In calendar year 2022, the total number of advertised job postings was over 44,000, with nearly one in three of those online advertised job postings located in Bernalillo County.

Exhibit 7: Online Advertised Job Postings for Registered Nurses (2022)



According to the World Health Organization (WHO) there is “no health without mental health.” The Global Burden of Disease Study shows that mental disorders (like depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder) make up the highest burden of disease both globally and in the US. Mental disorders are a concern for people of all ages (children to older adults) and are associated with age, gender, education, income level, race and ethnicity, geographical location and sexual orientation.

Mental disorders also have a serious impact on physical health and are associated with the prevalence, progression, and outcome of some of today's most pressing chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. They have long-lasting effects that not only include high psychosocial and economic costs for people living with the disorder, but also for their families, schools, workplaces, and communities.

The Department of Health conducts ongoing surveillance for indicators of mental health among students and adults in every county of New Mexico. Implementation of suicide prevention strategies statewide is a significant focus of the Department of Health's Office of School and Adolescent Health. Youth suicide prevention and intervention activities were initially funded by the New Mexico Legislature in June 2005. The Human Services Department recently modernized the New Mexico Medicaid system by integrating physical and behavioral health services in the Centennial Care program, which will help treat an individual in a more holistic manner.

The New Mexico Health Care Workforce Committee's 2021 Annual Report quantified the need for additional healthcare providers and behavioral healthcare providers. The Report indicated that the state as a whole has 151 fewer Primary Care Providers than the national benchmark, and assuming no redistribution of the current workforce, an additional 328 Primary Care Providers would be needed for all New Mexico counties to meet the national benchmark (8.3 per 10,000 population). The report also indicates that New Mexico has a shortage of Obstetrics and Gynecology Physicians, Registered Nurses and Clinical Nurse Specialists, Certified Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Physical Therapists, and Pharmacists. According to New Mexico's Workforce Connection Online System (WCOS), there were 8,468 advertised job openings for healthcare providers across the state in July 2023.²

Early Childhood Care and Education

According to the New Mexico Economic Development Department, poorer academic performance among students of color and low income students often starts at lower grade levels and can largely be attributed to a lack of early childhood learning opportunities. This disinvestment can compound over a student's life. The mission of the New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD) is to optimize the health, development, education, and well-being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of high-quality prenatal and early childhood programs and services. Fulfilling this mission requires staffing classrooms with well qualified workers and expanding childcare access throughout the state. To facilitate this, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham raised the wage floor for childcare providers.

ECECD accomplishments in State Fiscal Year 2023 that will affect demand for early childhood care workers include:

- Expanded access for 7,300 more children through the Child Care Assistance program from FY22 to FY23, largest increase of infants and toddlers
- Increased licensed childcare capacity by 3,000 from FY22 to FY23
- Grew the number of programs achieving the highest levels of quality by 8 percent from FY22 to FY23 (i.e., 4- and 5-star FOCUS programs)
- Awarded \$11.5 million in grants to 38 childcare providers creating 2,200 new slots

By 2027, ECECD aims to impact families, children, communities, and early childhood professionals through the following goals that will affect demand for early childhood care workers:

- Enrolling 5,000 additional children in high-quality NM PreK
- Providing 20,000 more families with affordable high-quality early care and education
- Engaging all 33 counties in New Mexico in an active local early childhood coalition.
- Improving early childhood facilities supported by a dedicated funding source and technical assistance for 23 Tribes, Pueblos and Nations
- Supporting 80 percent of families and babies with Plans of Care
- Providing 2,000 additional infants and toddlers with access to high-quality, inclusive child care.
- Supporting 500 indigenous early childhood educators in achieving higher credentials
- Engaging 5,000 additional families in evidence-based home visiting

Exhibit 8 illustrates the increase in the number of children who will be served by Child Care Assistance from FY 22 to FY26. Exhibit 9 estimates the saturation is based on the number of children meeting CCDF requirements: (A) estimated number of children in each birth cohort, (B) number of children eligible, based on new eligibility levels; (C) number of children with all available parents in the workforce. By FY 2026, ECECD projects serving 100% of eligible children who need care. This includes an increase in the families needing care, based on the relationship between maternal labor force participation and affordability of childcare.



The New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD) has estimated the future early childhood educators' workforce needs. ECECD anticipates an additional 200-225 workers in FY25, 50 in FY26, 120-150 in FY27, 80-100 in FY28, and 60-100 in FY29. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 224 advertised job openings for early childhood workers across the state in July 2023.

First Responders

First responders, such as fire fighters, paramedics, and police officers, provide essential services in every community in New Mexico. They are often the first to arrive on the scene of an emergency or disaster. They provide services essential to the response and the community, and they can be the difference between life and death for patients and community members.

Across New Mexico you will find plains, mountains, basins, mesas, desert lands, rivers, and lakes requiring first responders to prepare for a wide variety of environmental challenges. The state's demographics also swing between large metropolitan areas and small, rural towns.

Interoperability is needed for state and city agencies to work closely with the governments

representing the state's large Native American population, including part of the Navajo Nation, 19 federally recognized Pueblo communities of Puebloan peoples, and three different federally recognized Apache tribes.

In 2021, Governor Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico State Legislature set a goal of adding 1,000 new police officers across the State. Over \$150 million has been appropriated to meet these goals, over the past two years. Similarly, the entire nation faces a shortage of paramedics. A 2021 survey conducted by the American Ambulance Association found that the turnover among paramedics and EMTs ranges from 20 to 30 percent annually, meaning there's 100 percent turnover every four years. Firefighters are also in short supply. In connection with retention legislation in March 2023, the State Fire Marshal's Office reported there were 126 vacancies in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, Las Cruces City, Dona Ana County, Santa Fe City, and Santa Fe County fire departments. They also stated that there "are likely more vacancies among rural fire departments."

The second part of the first goal of this statewide plan is to grow a workforce to modernize New Mexico's infrastructure. Sectors helping to modernize New Mexico's infrastructure are: vertical and horizontal construction and building, broadband expansion, water infrastructure, and natural resource management.

Vertical and Horizontal Construction and Building

The construction industries are central to modernizing New Mexico's infrastructure. The construction sector comprises establishments primarily engaged in the construction of buildings or engineering projects (e.g., highways and utility systems). Establishments primarily engaged in the preparation of sites for new construction and establishments primarily engaged in subdividing land for sale as building sites also are included in this sector. Construction work done may include new work, additions, alterations, or maintenance and repairs. Activities of these establishments generally are managed at a fixed place of business, but they usually perform construction activities at multiple project sites. Production responsibilities for establishments in this sector are usually specified in (1) contracts with the owners of construction projects (prime contracts) or (2) contracts with other construction establishments (subcontracts). Establishments primarily engaged in contracts that include responsibility for all aspects of individual construction projects are commonly known as general contractors, but also may be known as design-builders, construction managers, turnkey contractors, or (in cases where two or more establishments jointly secure a general contract) joint-venture contractors. Construction managers that provide oversight and scheduling only (i.e., agency) as well as construction managers that are responsible for the entire project (i.e., at risk) are included as general contractor type establishments. The data above clearly set forth the projected demand for employees in the construction industries.

According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 857 advertised job openings for construction workers across the state in July 2023. DWS anticipates a marked increase in this number in the coming years, as a result of Build Back Better and state infrastructure funding.

Broadband Expansion

To better coordinate broadband deployment efforts among different state entities, in 2021 New Mexico Legislature passed, and Governor Lujan Grisham signed, Legislation establishing the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion and Connect New Mexico Council. The NM Legislative

Finance Committee (LFC), in their analysis of House Bill 10, the Connect New Mexico Act, introduced in the 55th Legislature - State of New Mexico- First Session, 2021, signed by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, stated that New Mexico lags behind the rest of the nation in broadband connectivity. State and federal investments and oversight have succeeded in connecting schools, hospitals, and other institutions, but the costs of “last-mile” infrastructure are high, and residents and businesses in many rural areas remain unserved. New Mexico created the NM Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) to facilitate the deployment of a “Statewide Open Access Middle Mile Network”. Funding for Connect New Mexico, totaling \$100 million (Senate Bill 377) was approved by the New Mexico Legislature, and signed by Governor Lujan Grisham. In addition, the State received \$675 million from the White House High-Speed Broadband Internet Initiative. According to New Mexico’s WCOS, there were 435 advertised job openings for broadband expansion workers across the state in July 2023. DWS anticipates a marked increase in this number in the coming years, as a result of the massive investment and numerous initiatives coming online in the next four years.

Water Infrastructure and Natural Resource Management

As a mostly desert state prone to droughts, New Mexico depends heavily on responsible water management and conservation. In New Mexico, water serves many purposes: it supplies drinking water, contributes to New Mexico’s recreation economy, supports crops and livestock, assists in the drilling of oil, natural gas, and more. The state relies on a mix of surface water, primarily from major rivers, and groundwater, primarily from aquifers. Both sources have challenges; surface water levels fluctuate greatly depending on precipitation, while aquifer levels have been diminishing over previous decades. New Mexico’s Office of the State Engineer, together with 16 water planning regions, regularly monitor water levels across the state to ensure appropriate conservation measures are taken so that New Mexico can sustain a robust water source for generations to come.

Since 2011, New Mexico has experienced several large-scale and long-lasting severe droughts, with more than a third of the last 10 years spent in emergency and exceptional drought conditions. New Mexico is not alone though, as the western half of the United States has been gripped by a “megadrought” that has lasted since 2000. Megadroughts last decades to centuries, drawing on a combination of high temperatures and low precipitation in the form of reduced rain and snowfall. Increasing average temperatures due to global climate change have resulted in stronger than expected drought conditions throughout the western states. Water management and conservation in New Mexico are critical regional challenges as they require the cooperation of many different stakeholders both public and private and are governed by a series of laws and compacts sometimes over a hundred years old.

Governor Lujan Grisham’s Administration strives to make our state a leader in developing reliable supplies of energy, and energy-efficient technologies and practices, with a balanced approach toward conserving our renewable and non-renewable resources; to protect the environment and ensure responsible reclamation of land and resources affected by mineral extraction; to be effective in leading our state in growing healthy, sustainable forests and managing them for a variety of users and ecologically sound uses; and to improve the state park system into a nationwide leader that contributes to a sustainable economy statewide while protecting New Mexico’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources for posterity. According to New Mexico’s WCOS, there were 718 advertised job openings for natural resources

management workers across the state in July 2023. DWS anticipates a marked increase in this number in the coming years, as a result of the ambitious goals and initiatives set forth above.

Anticipating and Preparing the Workforce for Changes in the New Mexico Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies one of the many disruptive changes that will have a profound impact on the employment landscape over the coming years. Many of the major drivers of transformation currently affecting global industries are expected to have a significant impact on jobs, ranging from significant job creation to job displacement, and from heightened labor productivity to widening skills gaps. The World Economic Forum has suggested that 65 percent of children entering primary school in 2016 will end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist. Governor Lujan Grisham's Administration is focused on preparing New Mexico to meet these challenges. To that end, her Administration is focusing on enhancing the state's workforce in areas such as energy transition, climate resilience, aerospace, intelligent manufacturing, biosciences, and sustainable and value-added agriculture.

Energy Transition

In 2019, the New Mexico Legislature passed, and Governor Lujan Grisham signed, Senate Bill 489, the Energy Transition Act (ETA). This landmark legislation sets bold statewide renewable energy standards and establishes a pathway for a low-carbon energy transition away from coal while providing workforce training and transition assistance to affected communities.

Developed over the course of a year with collaboration by community organizations, unions, energy groups and advocates, the ETA establishes New Mexico as a national leader in clean energy. The ETA sets a statewide renewable energy standard of 50 percent by 2030 for New Mexico investor-owned utilities and rural electric cooperatives and a goal of 80 percent by 2040, in addition to setting zero-carbon resources standards for investor-owned utilities by 2045 and rural electric cooperatives by 2050. The law transitions New Mexico away from coal and toward clean energy, ensuring greater renewable energy production and reducing costs for consumers, and provides tens of millions of dollars of economic and workforce support for communities impacted by coal plant closures, as well as the development of renewable replacement power in San Juan County. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 109 advertised job openings for energy transition workers across the state in July 2023. DWS anticipates a marked increase in this number in the coming years, as a result of the ambitious goals and initiatives set forth above.

Climate resilience

In January 2019, Governor Lujan Grisham issued Executive Order 2019-003 on Climate Change and Energy Waste Prevention, which created the state Interagency Climate Change Task Force and included directives for agencies to incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation practices into their policies and operations. The Energy Conservation and Management Division (ECMD) of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department supports the Task Force through coordination, technical assistance, planning, and policy development and supports interagency work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation, transportation, industry, the built environment, and natural and working lands.

Early in 2022, the Task Force convened a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to assess draft climate goals and implementing actions and offer input on gaps or challenges to

implementation. The TAG was brought together to provide a diverse perspective on the draft climate goals and implementing actions. This group included representatives from industry, environment, tribal and environmental justice organizations, and represented different geographic regions of the state, differing areas of expertise and experience in different sectors that contribute to the state's greenhouse gas emissions. The resulting input from this process is being used to inform the final goals of the 2023-2028 Climate Action Plan, which is under development and expected to be released in early 2023.

In 2022, Federal Emergency Management Agency Building Infrastructure & Resilient Communities (BRIC) funding was awarded to ECMD through two subgrants from the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The two grants support climate change adaptation planning and climate awareness outreach respectively. The planning grant will be used to convene state agencies in a planning process to develop a climate mitigation and adaptation annex to the state Hazard Mitigation Plan. The climate change awareness grant will be used to develop partnerships with stakeholders, local governments and Indian Tribes and Pueblos to build their respective capacities to plan for natural hazards exacerbated by climate change.

According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 187 advertised job openings for climate resilience workers across the state in July 2023. DWS anticipates a marked increase in this number in the coming years, as a result of the ambitious goals and initiatives set forth above.

Aerospace

Leaders across the state from industry, government, and academia, work together to make New Mexico a center of innovation for space. New Mexico has an early advantage in specialization areas that support the aerospace industry, including microelectronics, optics, directed energy, computer software, satellite manufacturers and operators, and data analytics. These sub-industries of aerospace are strengths in New Mexico and many colleges and universities have programs that support them. As home to the world's first commercial spaceport, three national research laboratories, three Air Force bases and three testing facilities with the most experienced FAA approved UAS test center with access to over 15,000 square miles of restricted air space, New Mexico is the place to be to grow aerospace businesses, jobs, and educational opportunities. This is a priority sector in the State's economic development strategy. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 3,720 advertised job openings for aerospace workers across the state in July 2023.

Intelligent Manufacturing

New Mexico has a strong and versatile manufacturing ecosystem that is comprised of a diverse range of firms, from large corporations such as Intel to small, family-owned businesses. In addition to its three national research facilities, New Mexico is home to three nationally recognized research universities. The state is ranked first in non-industry investment in research and development, second in high-tech jobs, and seventh in patents, providing unparalleled capacity for research collaboration and technology commercialization in many areas that contribute to advanced manufacturing. New Mexico has many companies utilizing technologies spun out of these institutions. Education and research opportunities at these facilities contribute graduates in many fields including engineering, optics, nanotechnologies, physics, and manufacturing hardware and software development. This is a priority sector in the

State's economic development strategy. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 2,281 advertised job openings for manufacturing workers across the state in July 2023.

Biosciences

New Mexico's bioscience industry is growing, and New Mexico seeks to capitalize on the momentum and opportunities in the industry. New Mexico's bioscience industry garnered about \$1.2 billion in revenue in 2015. There are 700 biotech companies now working in human health, agricultural and environmental issues around the state. These businesses directly employ about 9,300 people, and up to 41,000 if related support jobs are included. This is a priority sector in the State's economic development strategy. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 1,836 advertised job openings for bioscience workers across the state in July 2023.

Sustainable and Value-Added Agriculture

New Mexico's economy has been based in cattle ranching and farming for two centuries, and still has a significant presence with 24,700 farms in operation. On a large scale, New Mexico's agricultural producers lead the United States in the production of chiles and pecans, alongside the state's strong dairy industry. On a more local scale, the value-added agriculture industry serves as a vital source of income and employment for many located in New Mexico's rural communities, including the state's large Native American population. Supporting employees and employers in New Mexico's value-added agriculture strengthens rural communities and is a foundational industry that provides employment to a significant component of NM workforce. This is a priority sector in the State's economic development strategy. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 372 advertised job openings for sustainable and value-added agriculture workers across the state in July 2023.

Employer Needs Survey

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Administration is committed to providing the state's employers with a highly skilled workforce. Part of this commitment includes working with employers to assess their workforce needs. As part of this effort, in 2023 the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) piloted a biennial Employer Needs Survey. The current survey is designed to gauge employer's hiring and retention challenges, how they responded to these difficulties, and their awareness and use of employer services available from NMDWS.

Results from the survey revealed employers were experiencing hiring difficulties, with more than three-quarters of all responding employers reporting difficulty in filling at least one position in 2022 ([Exhibit 10](#)). When asked about reasons for hiring difficulties, almost half (49.4 percent) indicated that too few applicants applied for open positions. This may, in part be due to ratio of unemployed New Mexican to the number of open positions in the state. In July 2023 there were 0.6 unemployed New Mexicans for every advertised job in the state, or about 33,500 more jobs available than there are unemployed New Mexicans available to fill them. Just under a quarter of employers (23.0 percent) reported not having any challenges finding any qualified candidates for their open positions.

Challenge	% Employers citing challenge
Too few applicants	49.4%
Candidates lack technical skills required for success	32.4%
Candidates lack required experience	30.0%
Candidates lacked soft skills required for success	26.9%
New employees quit soon after hire without giving notice (stop showing up)	25.9%
Candidates accept offer but never report to work	24.5%
We require employees to work on-site, no telework or hybrid schedules available	18.7%
Other businesses offer higher wages than we can	17.3%
New employees give notice and quit soon after hire	16.1%
Candidates lack educational qualifications	13.7%
We require employees to have a clean driving record	8.9%
The business is located in a remote area and there are very few local candidates	8.9%
All of our positions are part-time	8.6%
We drug test all employees (and marijuana is included in the list of disqualifying drugs)	7.9%
The work is physically demanding	7.4%
We only offer the minimum benefits legally permitted	6.5%
Candidates cite lack of childcare	6.2%
Commuting distances are too great	4.1%
The work requires employees to travel and be away from home several nights a week	2.4%

Some employers have proactively responded to challenges they have encountered in hiring staff by increasing pay and benefits, cross training staff, turned away business, or working with

outside organizations ([Exhibit 11](#)). Just under half of employers (47.2 percent) indicated they increased employee pay, 13.9 percent have increased employee benefits, while 5.8 percent of employers indicated they started providing employee benefits. Employers are also examining their internal processes to reduce their need to hire externally; 15.1 percent of employers have cross-trained employees to promote from within and 11.5 percent of employers reported they cross trained employees to increase scheduling flexibility.

A small percentage of employers (2.6 percent) indicated their response to hiring challenges has been to require current employees to work longer hours. Staffing shortages have resulted in 31.4 percent of employers turning away business because they did not have sufficient staff. Using a temporary hiring agency to meet their workforce needs has been a strategy employed by 7.9 percent of employers while 5.7 percent of employers have turned to the NMDWS for assistance in hiring new employees.

Just under a quarter of employers (23.5 percent) indicated they have not had any difficulties hiring employees and 18.2 percent of employers indicated they had not changed their hiring or business practices, or their employee compensation and benefits packages in response to any hiring challenges.

Exhibit 11: How Businesses Responded to Hiring Challenges (2022)

Response	% Employers Giving Response
Increased employee pay	47.2%
Turned away business because we do not have the staff available to meet demand	31.4%
Cross-trained employees to promote from within	15.1%
Increased employee benefits	13.9%
Cross-trained employees to increase schedule flexibility	11.5%
Worked with a temporary hiring agency	7.9%
Contacted the NM Department of Workforce Solutions for hiring assistance	5.8%
Started providing employee benefits	5.8%
Required employees to work longer hours	2.6%

More than one-third (37.1 percent) of employers were unaware that the NMDWS provides services to employers. Although 41.6 percent of employers indicated they had used NMDWS services related to Information on Rules and Regulations for Businesses, such as the NM Paid Sick Leave Law, the Wage Pay Act, and the Minimum Wage Act, 21.9 percent of employers were not aware that the NMDWS provided information on rules and regulations for businesses. More than one in ten employers (10.2 percent) have used the Labor Market Information provided by the NMDWS, however 41.6 percent of employers were unaware that the NMDWS provided this

information. Similarly, while 8.8 percent of employers had utilized the NMDWS to help them develop job descriptions, 48.2 percent of employers did not know the NMDWS could assist them with this task.

More than half of employers in New Mexico were not aware that the NMDWS could assist them in starting an apprenticeship program (50.4 percent), ensure they are compliant with the Rapid Response and WARN Act (65.0 percent), provide skill assessments for potential hires (51.1 percent), or provide information about the Internal Revenue Services' Work Opportunity Tax Credit (57.0 percent).

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.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

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

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

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

While assessment of New Mexico's employment demand provides critical information regarding the state's current and future economic conditions, analyses of the state's population trends, and labor force statistics reveal additional economic and workforce insights. Population estimates, and the characteristics of a population, are fundamental measures for assessing an area's economy. Population and its characteristics tell a story of not just what the local community looks like, but also the economic activity that can and will be generated from that population. Economic mobility, purchasing power, and demand for public services can all be evaluated with an understanding of an area's population. And as populations evolve and change, data will help determine what business and policy investments can be made to support the current well-being and future opportunities available to that population.

New Mexico's population in 2022 was 2,113,344. It was one of 16 states whose population declined from 2021 to 2022, falling by 0.2 percent, or by 3,333 people. The nation's population during that same time increased by 0.4 percent.

Although population declined over the year, since 2017 the state's population increased by 1.0 percent, which lagged the U.S. population growth rate of 2.6 percent. Population growth in New

Mexico between 2017 and 2022 was entirely driven by natural increases (births). Since 2017, the natural increase of the population was estimated at 1,722 people, the result of 94,134 births and 92,412 deaths. Net migration had a loss of 1,144 people, which means more people moved out of the state than into the state.

New Mexico's population is highly concentrated in six counties, with two out of three people living in one of the following counties: Bernalillo, Doña Ana, Santa Fe, Sandoval, San Juan, and Valencia. Bernalillo had the highest share of the state's total population (31.8 percent).

Twenty-seven counties had populations below 3.5 percent of the state total. Fourteen counties had less than one percent of New Mexico's population. The least populated counties in ascending order by population were Harding, De Baca, Catron, Union, Hidalgo, Mora, and Guadalupe, where populations in each county did not exceed 5,000 people.

The Census Bureau's Job-to-Job data provides information on worker movement between states. Between 2010 and the second quarter of 2022 (the most recent data available), more people left New Mexico to work elsewhere than the number of workers who moved to New Mexico from another state. This left the state with a negative net worker migration of 19,983 individuals. Since 2010, net migration has been negative in every year except 2019 and the first half of 2022.

The number of persons in the prime working age group of 25 to 54 increased by 1.1 percent from 2017 to 2022 in the United States, while the number of persons in this age group in New Mexico increased by 5,994 people, or 0.8 percent. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of people in the age group 65 to 74 had the fastest population growth in New Mexico (13.2 percent), which is expected as Baby Boomers age. In New Mexico, the population of those 75 years old and older increased faster (16.1 percent) than the U.S. average (13.5 percent).

Regarding populations facing barriers, a majority of New Mexico residents are people of color, with more than half of all New Mexicans (50.2 percent) identifying as Hispanic or Latino, the highest among all states in the nation. The state's Hispanic/Latino population has also been growing in recent years. New Mexicans identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native represented 11.2 percent of the state's population, the second highest share in the country, following Alaska.

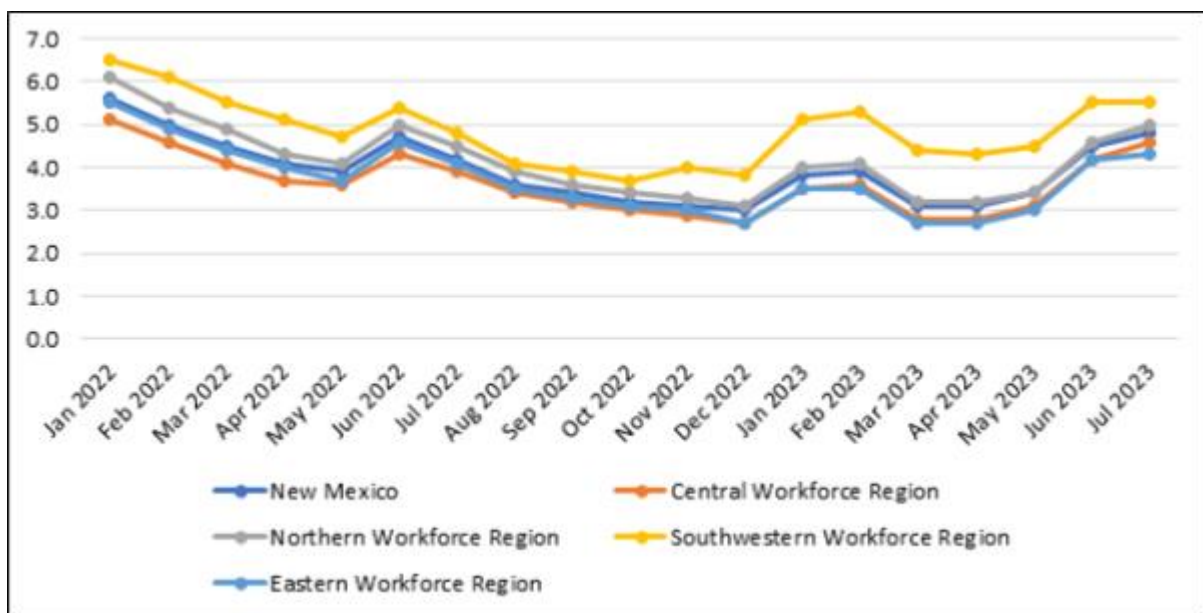
Regarding populations facing barriers, as of 2021, there were approximately 332,720 persons in New Mexico who reported living with a disability. This represented 16.0 percent of New Mexico's total population, a share that was 3.4 percentage points larger than the U.S. share of 12.6 percent. In 2021, New Mexico had a higher share of persons living with a disability and living in poverty compared to the U.S. Those differences were 3.4 percentage points and 5.7 percentage points, respectively. New Mexico's share of Veterans (8.6 percent) was also higher than the U.S. average.

Also regarding populations facing barriers, the concentration of those living with a disability ranged from 9.3 percent (Los Alamos) to 34.4 percent (Mora). Counties in which persons with a disability represented at least one-quarter of the population include Catron, Sierra, Colfax, and San Miguel. Besides Los Alamos, five other counties reported less than 15 percent of their respective populations having a disability—Lea, De Baca, Santa Fe, Sandoval, and Bernalillo.

1. *Employment and Unemployment*

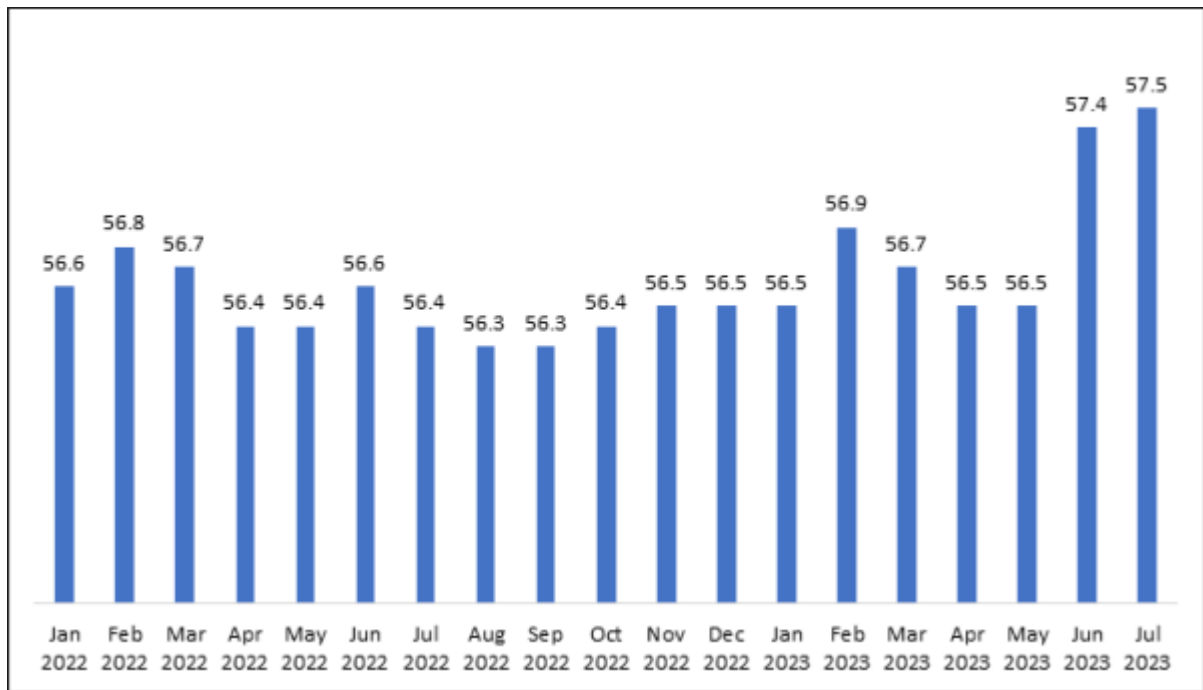
During the 12-month period from August 2022 to July 2023, New Mexico's statewide unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) averaged 3.6 percent, ranging from a high of 4.8 percent to a low of 3.0 percent ([Exhibit 12](#)). This includes the lowest unemployment rate the state has ever measured (3.0 percent in December 2022). Over the last year New Mexico has continued to experience growth in its labor force, expanding from over 943 thousand in August 2022 to over 969 thousand in July 2023, which is the highest recorded labor force estimate for the state. Labor force estimates include the number of individuals who are working as well as those who are unemployed. As of July 2023, there were 928,046 persons employed in the state and 34,770 unemployed workers with a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 3.6 percent.

Despite the low statewide unemployment rate, labor market conditions have varied by region in the state. The Eastern and Central regions have experienced the lowest average unemployment rate with both at 3.3 percent, the Northern region averaged 3.7 percent, and the Southwest region had the highest average rate at 4.5 percent.



Although the state has been experiencing growth in its labor force over the last several years, the state's labor force participation rate has been experiencing a decline, falling from an average of 63.6 percent in 1994 to an average of 56.5 percent in 2022. However, over the last several months the state's overall labor force participation rate has been rising and reached 57.5 percent in July 2023 ([Exhibit 13](#)).

Exhibit 13: Labor Force Participation Rate, by Month (January 2022 to July 2023)



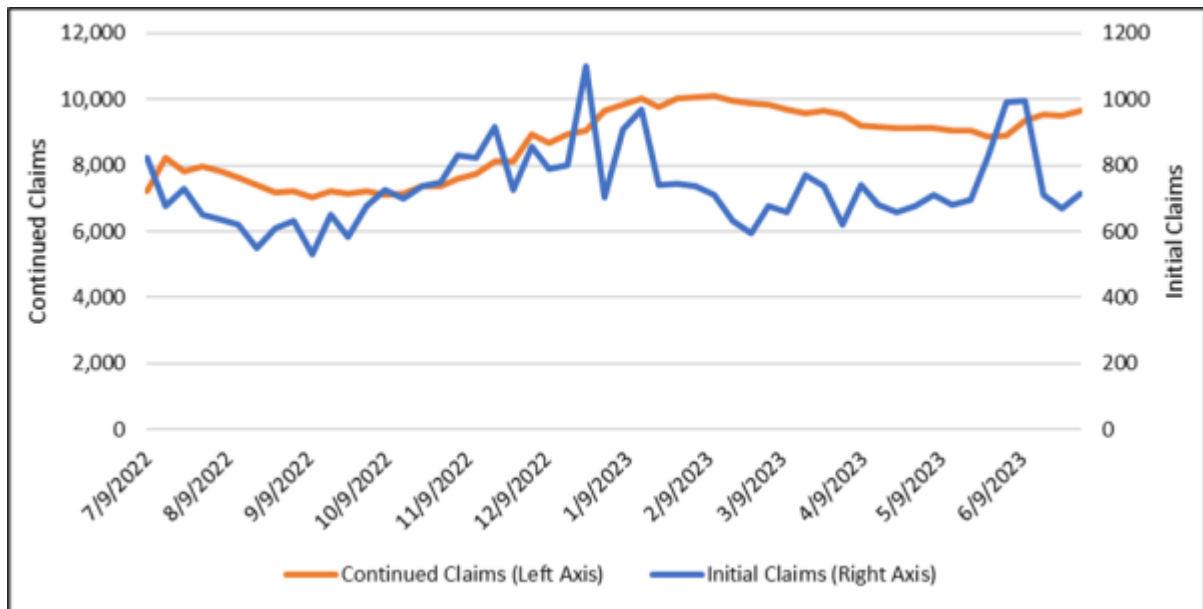
In addition to geographical differences in labor force statistics, there are marked differences across the state in unemployment rates for several demographic groups. Over the last year, the unemployment rate for youth (age 16-24) was 8.3 percent, compared to 3.7 percent for adult workers (age 25-54). Black and Hispanic workers had unemployment rates of 2.8 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively, while the unemployment rate for non-Hispanic whites was 3.5 percent.

New Mexico's labor force statistics also reveal significant variations with respect to several sub-populations, including individuals with disabilities as well as the veterans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2021 approximately 14.0 percent of New Mexico's population aged 20 to 64 was characterized as having some sort of disability (166,161 individuals). Of these individuals, only 36.0 percent were employed, and 56.1 percent were not in the labor force. The unemployment rate of those with a disability was 17.3 percent. New Mexico had approximately 128,924 veterans living in the state in 2021, with an unemployment rate of 5.0 percent and a labor force participation rate of 72.1 percent for veterans aged 18 to 64.

(ii) Labor Market Trends

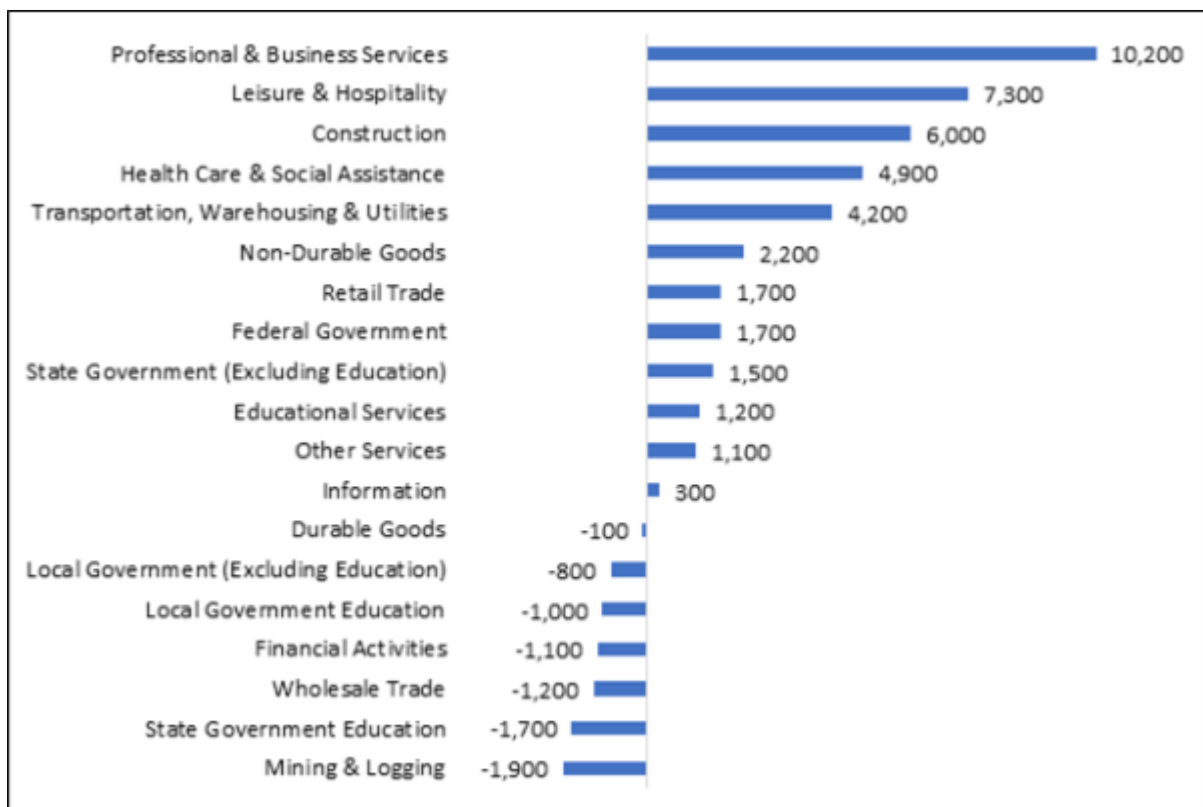
Industry Trends

Since the pandemic, New Mexico's economy has been experiencing a period of job growth and low unemployment, but portions of the state's labor force continue to be impacted by job losses. Over the 12-month period from July 2022 to June 2023 the state's unemployment insurance system processed over 38,000 initial claims for unemployment insurance, a decline from nearly 90,000 initial claims in the previous program year ([Exhibit 14](#)). The average number of continued claims per week from July 2022 to July 2023 was 8,661. The population of claimants were 52.5 percent male and 47.5 percent female. Slightly over 55 percent were Hispanic and 62.1 percent were white. In terms of age distribution, over two out of three claimants were between the ages of 25 and 54, while 8.6 percent were less than 25 years of age.



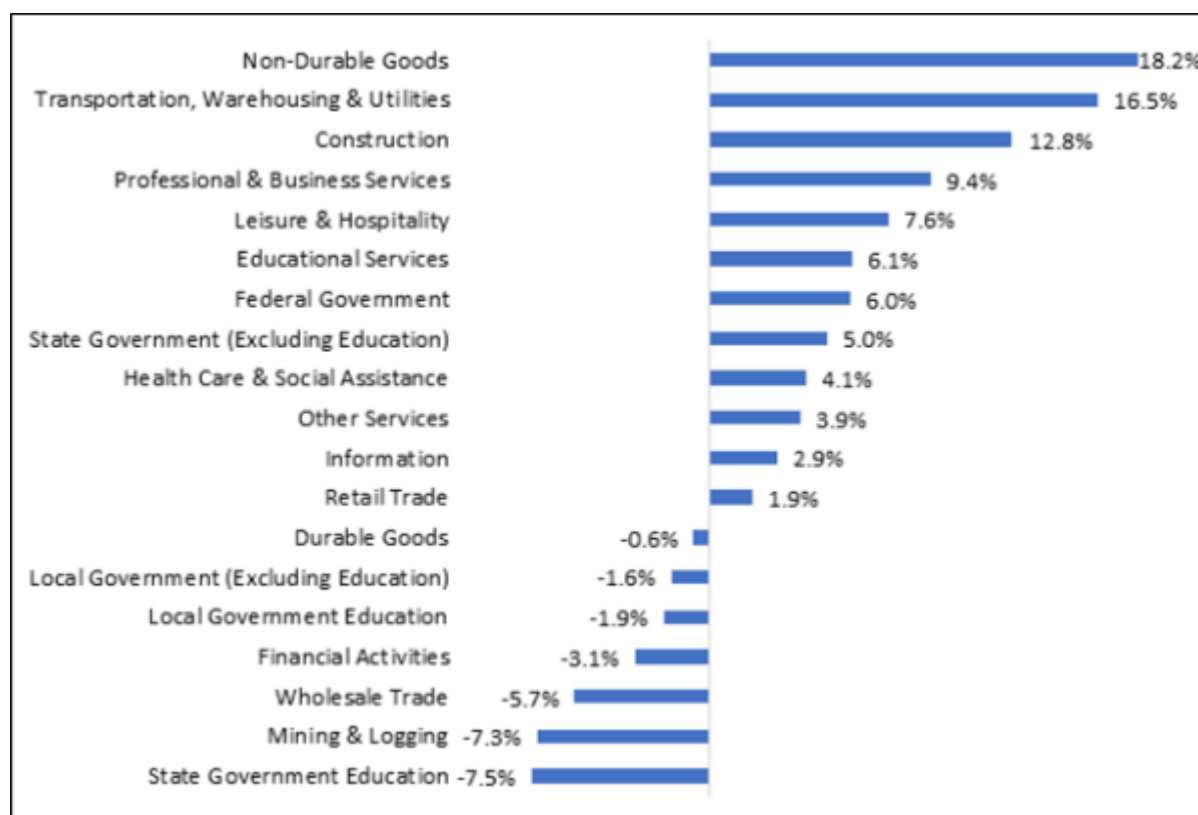
Professional and Business Services experienced the greatest increase in employment, more than 10,000 jobs, between January 2019 and June 2023 ([Exhibit 15](#)). The leisure and hospitality industry, construction industry, health care and social assistance industry, and the transportation, warehousing, and utilities industry all experienced a job growth of more than 4,000 jobs. The mining & logging industry, state government (education), wholesale trade, financial activities, and local government education all lost more than 1,000 jobs between January 2019 and June 2023.

Exhibit 15: Change in Employment by Industry and Sub-Industry (January 2019 to June 2023)



Non-Durable Goods manufacturing experienced the greatest percentage increase in employment between January 2019 and June 2023 ([Exhibit 16](#)). Construction and Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities industries also experienced a job growth of more than 10 percent. The Mining & Logging industry and State Government (Education) had a more than 7 percent decrease in employment between January 2019 and June 2023.

Exhibit 16: Percent Change in Employment by Industry and Sub-Industry (January 2019 to June 2023)



While information regarding statewide employment patterns provides an overview of the relative strength of the state's economy, more localized industry patterns can reveal regional and local strengths and opportunities. Information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage program provides a more refined view of local employment trends.

Based on the annual average information for 2022, New Mexico had over 67,700 business establishments that paid almost \$46 billion in wages to the state's workers. Over 40 percent of those establishments are in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), also known as the Central Workforce Region. The Santa Fe MSA has the next largest number of establishments (9.9 percent) while the Las Cruces MSA accounts for the next highest employment (8.2 percent).

The Albuquerque MSA/Central Workforce Region accounts for 46.6 percent of the state's employment and 47.8 percent of wages. The Northern Workforce Region, which includes the Santa Fe and Farmington MSAs, has 21.9 percent of the state's employment and 21.8 percent of the state's wages. The Eastern Region accounts for 16 percent of the state's employment and

15.7 percent of wages, while the Southwestern region accounts for 12.2 percent of employment and 10.1 percent of wages.

Bernalillo County, part of the Albuquerque MSA and the largest county in New Mexico, accounts for 42.3 percent of the state's total wages, but ranks fourth in average weekly wage with \$1,112 per week. Los Alamos County leads the state with an average weekly wage of \$1,988 followed by Eddy and Lea counties, at \$1,353 and \$1,221 respectively. Only these four counties have a weekly wage higher than the state's average of \$1,064, all other New Mexico counties average lower wages. Los Alamos and Bernalillo counties both have a high concentration of employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector with Los Alamos and Sandia National Labs while Eddy and Lea counties both have a large concentration of companies in the Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (Oil and Gas operations).

The counties with the smallest employment included the Harding, De Baca, Mora, and Catron counties, each with less than 1,000 in average employment and combined account for 0.2 percent of the state's average employment. The largest industry sectors in these counties were mostly Public Administration and Health Care and Social Assistance. While both sectors are not the lowest paying in New Mexico, the average weekly wage for these sectors is typically below the state average.

The largest industry sector in New Mexico is Health Care and Social Assistance with 17 percent of the state's employment. Health Care and Social Assistance is the top employing industry for 15 of the state's 33 counties. The top paying industry is Management of Companies and Enterprises, which also accounts for the least amount of the state's employment at 0.7 percent, with an average weekly wage of \$2,005. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services closely follows with \$1,849 and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extract with \$1,839.

Occupational Trends

New Mexico's existing workforce is spread across a diverse group of occupations ([Exhibit 17](#)). About 14.2 percent of the state's occupational mix is centered in Office and Administrative Support Occupations, 9.4 percent in Food Preparation and Serving Related, 8.2 percent in Sales and Related, and 7.5 percent in Transportation and Material Moving Occupations. Employment in Health Care Related Occupations is anticipated to continue to expand. Current employment levels reveal that 5.8 percent of all occupational employment is in Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and 6.6 percent in Healthcare Support Occupations. An additional 6.0 percent of the state's occupational employment is concentrated in Education, Training and Library occupations.

Exhibit 17: Total Employment and Annual Median Wage by Major Occupational Group (2022)

Major Occupational Group	Total Employment	Employment Share of Total	Annual Median Wage
Total all Occupations	818,800		\$39,900
Office & Administrative Support	116,000	14.2%	\$37,250
Food Preparation & Serving	76,580	9.4%	\$26,930
Sales & Related	67,390	8.2%	\$29,990
Transportation & Moving Moving	61,640	7.5%	\$36,090
Healthcare Support	53,780	6.6%	\$27,040
Construction & Extraction	53,380	6.5%	\$45,570
Education, Training & Library	49,200	6.0%	\$55,210
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Management	47,400	5.8%	\$78,560
	43,700	5.3%	\$96,760
Business & Financial	42,480	5.2%	\$65,800
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	35,420	4.3%	\$45,770
Building, Grounds Cleaning, Maintenance	26,100	3.2%	\$28,420
Production	25,160	3.1%	\$37,120
Protective Service	23,530	2.9%	\$41,600
Architecture & Engineering	22,610	2.8%	\$99,730
Computer & Math	20,530	2.5%	\$82,780
Community & Social Service	13,770	1.7%	\$48,800
Personal Care & Service	11,060	1.4%	\$27,800
Life, Physical & Social Science	10,000	1.2%	\$67,550
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	9,600	1.2%	\$45,720
Legal	6,540	0.8%	\$67,390
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	2,950	0.4%	\$28,260

(iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Educational attainment is important for the overall economic success of New Mexico. A more educated and skilled workforce assists in developing, staffing, retaining, and supporting businesses that provide better employment opportunities. For their part, communities must foster a healthy business environment and provide competitive employment opportunities so that they can retain, and attract new, skilled residents. Though increasing the educational attainment levels of a population is a large task requiring a multifaceted approach, higher educational attainment levels typically correlate with higher incomes, lower poverty rates, and lower unemployment.

Overall, the educational attainment of New Mexico's population is lower than the educational attainment of the country. Persons with a bachelor's degree or more comprised 28.5 percent of the state's population, a share that was 5.2 percentage points lower than the U.S. share of 33.7 percent.

The good news is that the educational attainment of New Mexico's population has been increasing in recent years. The share of the population with an associate degree through graduate or professional degree has increased between 2017 and 2021, while the share with less than a high school diploma or equivalent has fallen.

Encouragingly, the positive trend in New Mexico educational landscape extends beyond increased higher education attainment; it is complimented by notable improvements in high school graduation rates since 2016. As of 2021, 76.8 percent of students (based on a four-year

cohort) graduated from high school. Graduation rates increased the most for African Americans (of the racial and ethnic groups) and English language learners (of the non-race/ethnicity categories[1]). The graduation rate of Native American students was the lowest of the racial/ethnic groups but increased by 8.6 percentage points between 2016 and 2021.

New Mexico's system of public higher education is comprised of four sectors, the 4-Year public school sector, the 2-Year Branch community colleges associated with the 4-year institutions, 2-Year independent community colleges, and Tribal colleges. New Mexico also has 71 accredited, 47 exempted, and 22 non-accredited institutions providing educational services to state residents.

New Mexico's Adult Education system, which is Title II of WIOA and based in the New Mexico Higher Education Department, has seen rapid improvement of outcomes post-pandemic. In 2023, the system improved outcomes in all federal performance indicators, raised enrollment by 15% and increased the number of high school equivalency completions in the state by 17% in comparison with 2022. These were the highest Adult Education outcomes in New Mexico in all federal categories in the last five fiscal years.

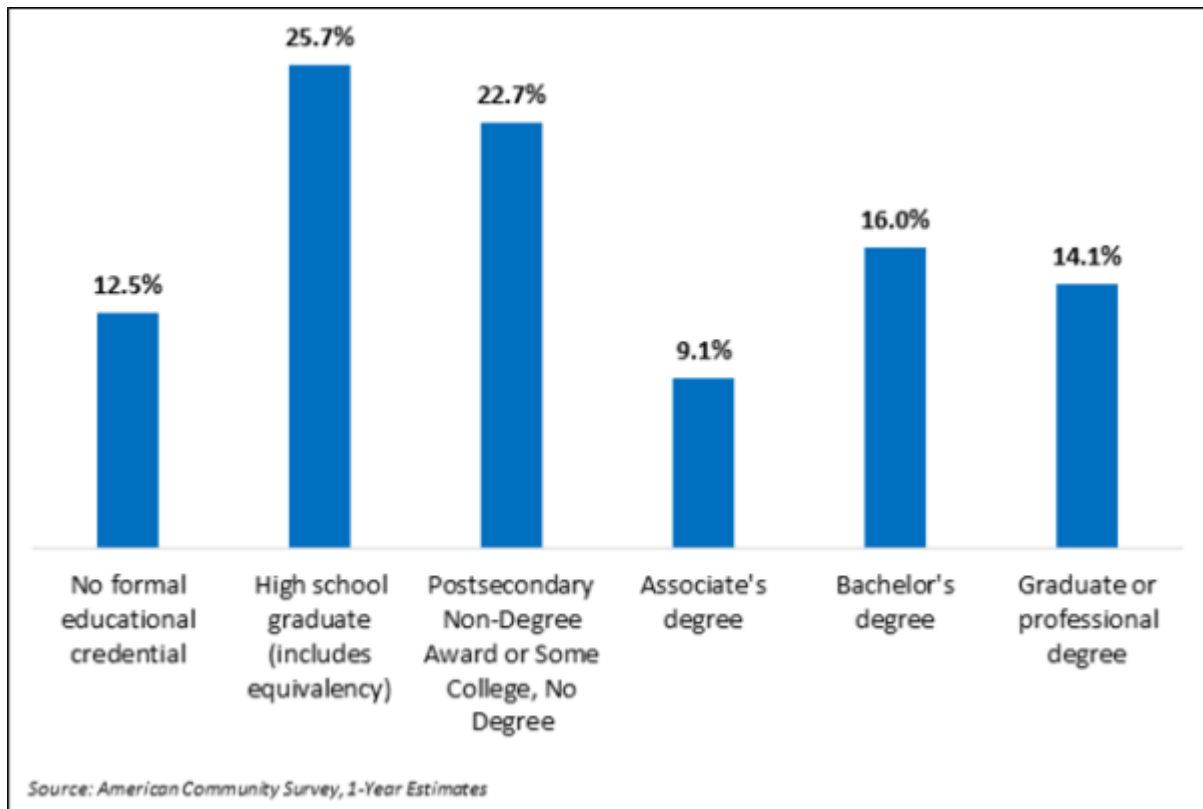
Complementing New Mexico's higher educational institutions, a wide range of apprenticeship and career pathway programs are offered in a wide variety of trades and occupations throughout the state in support of the goals to grow a workforce that supports safe and healthy New Mexican families and communities, grow a workforce to modernize New Mexico's infrastructure, and anticipate and prepare the workforce for changes in the New Mexico economy.

Apprenticeship programs combine paid on-the-job training with related classroom instruction. The goal is to prepare individuals for skilled occupations while equipping them with the practical experience that employers seek in applicants. As a result, employers often ensure that program completers retain employment at an increased wage.

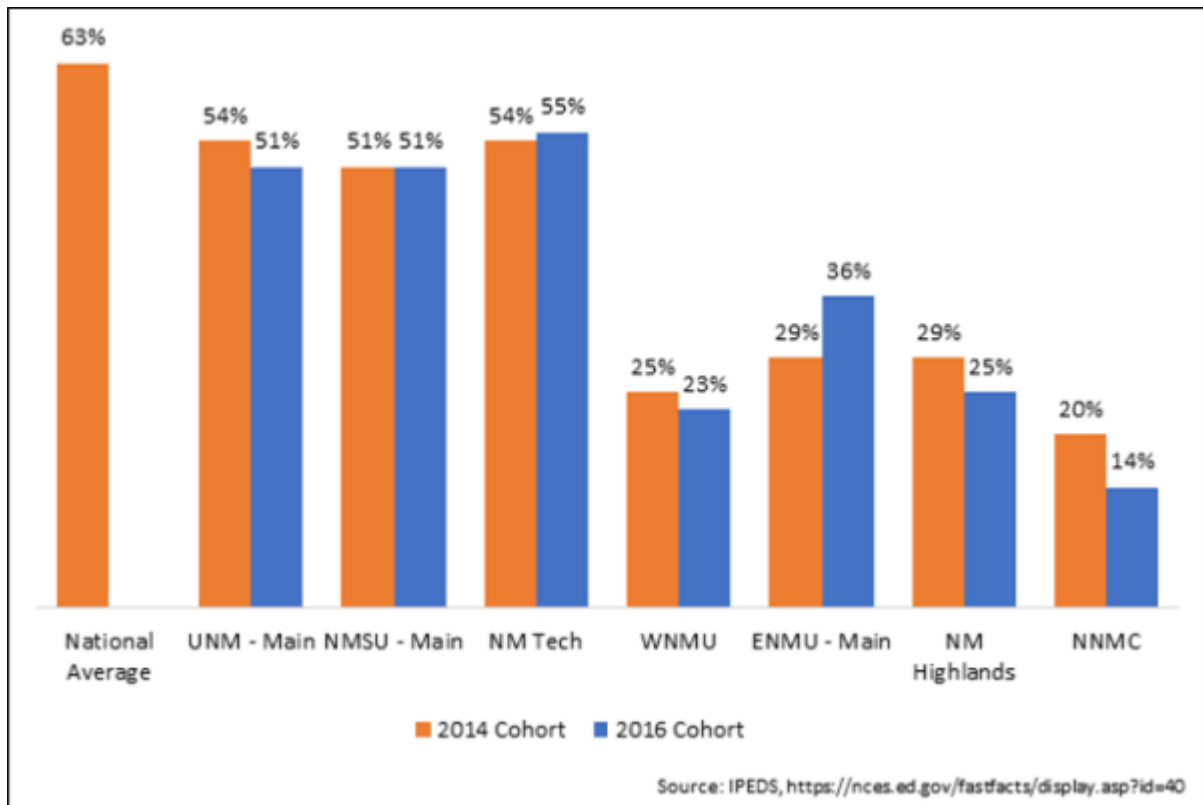
The NMDWS State Apprenticeship Office works with Local Workforce Development Boards to assist participants with the cost of training. This can include the cost of tuition, training fees, and related expenses such as supplies and equipment. Apprenticeship Office staff can also work with employers to determine if they are eligible to have a portion of participant wages reimbursed. Program completers receive either a certificate of completion, college degree, or industry-recognized credential. Oftentimes, the employer will retain the employee at an increased wage. Additionally, NMDWS also offers a series of free, on demand, on-line, workshops on soft skills in the workplace, resume skills, and interviewing skills, to job seekers.

While the combined efforts of these public and private institutions help produce a skilled workforce for the state, challenges still exist. For example, only 30.6 percent of respondents to the 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey report completing the training they most recently participated at a New Mexico Workforce Connection Center. Of the 61.9 percent indicating they had not completed their most recent training course, less than a quarter of the participants stopped attending because they found employment.

In 2021, more than 12 percent of the population 25 years and over had less than a high school diploma, 25.7 percent had a high school diploma, 22.7 percent had some college but no degree, 9.1 percent had an associate's degree, and 16.0 percent had a Bachelor's degree while 14.1 percent had a graduate or professional degree as their highest level of educational attainment ([Exhibit 18](#)).

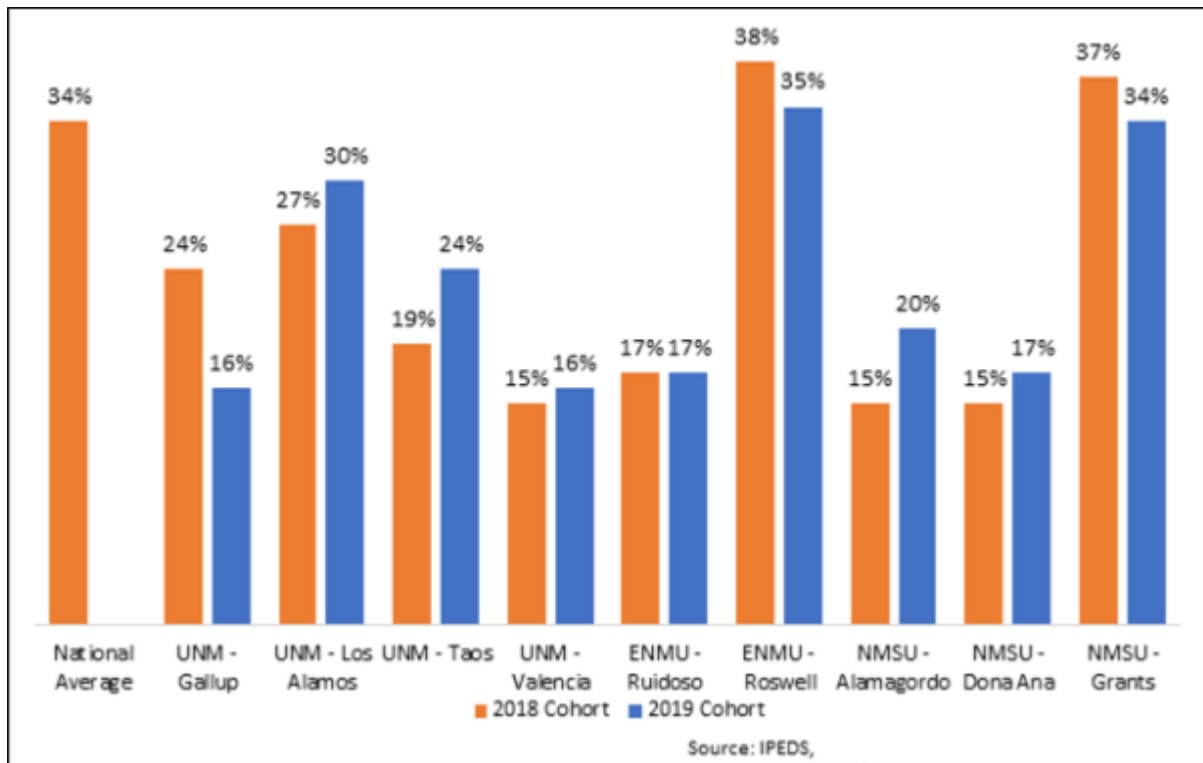


In 2020, the overall 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at 4-year degree-granting public institutions in Fall 2014 was 63 percent ([Exhibit 19](#)). The graduation rates at all New Mexico's 4-year degree-granting public institutions did not meet or exceed the national average graduation rate. The HEIs with the highest graduation rate in the state, UNM – Main and New Mexico Tech, both had graduation rates nine percentage points below the nation's average graduation rate.



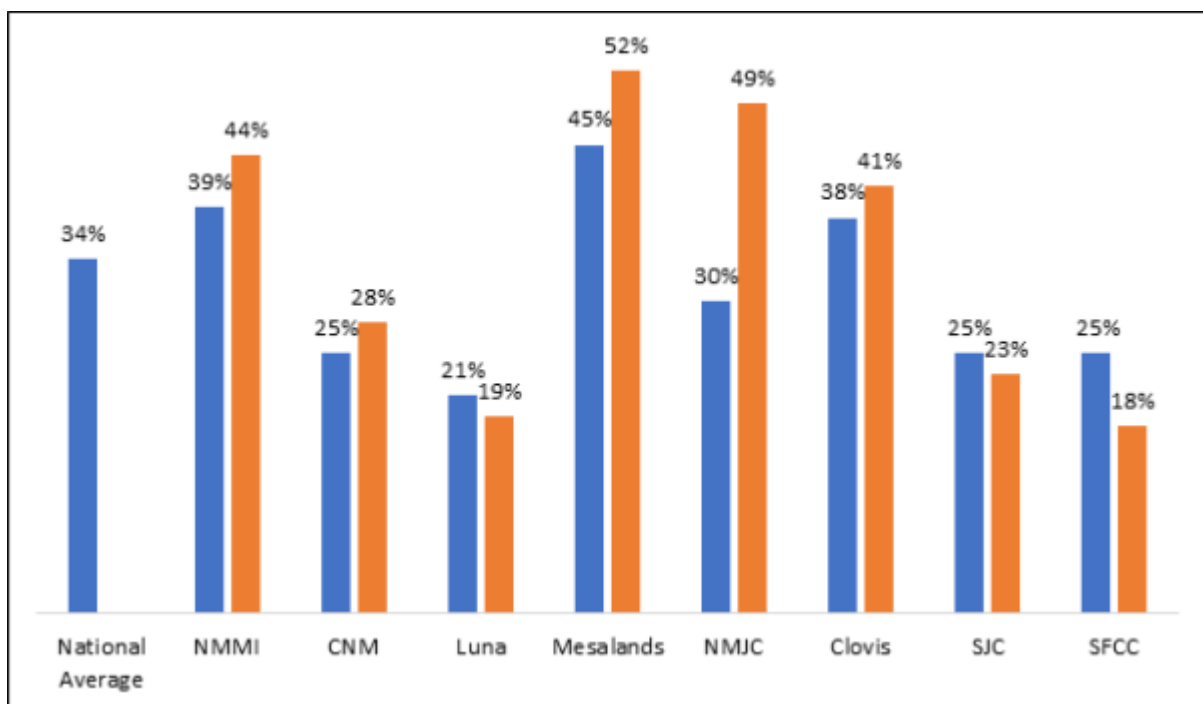
Of the state's nine Branch community colleges, only two, ENMU - Roswell and NMSU - Grants, had a graduation rate of 150 percent of "Normal Time" that exceeded the national average for the 2018 cohort (Exhibit 20).

Exhibit 20: Percentage of Full-Time, First-Time Students Who Began at a Two-Year Institutions and Graduated within 150% of "Normal Time to Completion" for Their Program, By Institution (Fall 2018 and Fall 2019)



Three of the state's eight independent community colleges had a graduation rate of 150 percent of "Normal Time" that exceeded the national average for the 2018 cohort ([Exhibit 21](#)).

Percentage of Full-Time, First-Time Students Who Began at a Two-Year Institutions and Graduated within 150% of "Normal Time to Completion" for Their Program, By Independent Community College (Fall 2018 and Fall 2019)



In addition to the educational attainment of the state's population, New Mexico faces challenges in addressing the education and training needs of those individuals with disabilities. Based on

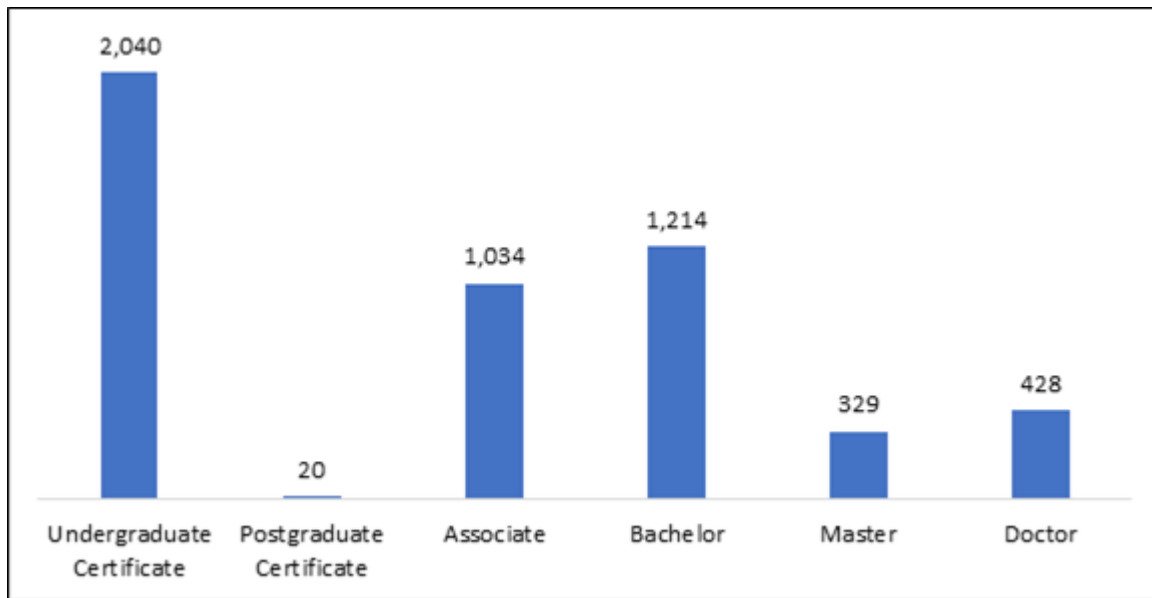
information from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-year estimates, more than 20 percent of New Mexicans 25 years and older (296,241 residents) have a disability. Of these, 19 percent have less than a high school diploma, 30 percent are high school graduates, 31 percent have some college or associate degree, and 20 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. When compared to the population 25 and older without a disability, only 10.5 percent of those without a disability have less than high school diploma, 24 percent are high school graduates, 32 percent have some college or associate degree, and 33 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

In 2021 approximately 7.9 percent of the state's population, aged 18 years and over, 128,924 residents, were veterans of military service. Veterans (4.3 percent) are less likely than nonveterans (13.4 percent) to not have a high school diploma. The terminal level of education for a slightly greater share of nonveterans (26 percent) than veterans (23.6 percent) was a high school diploma, however a greater percentage of veterans had completed some college or an Associate degree than had nonveterans (36 percent to 31 percent, respectively) and the difference between veterans and nonveterans with a bachelor's degrees or higher was even greater, 36 percent to 29.5 percent).

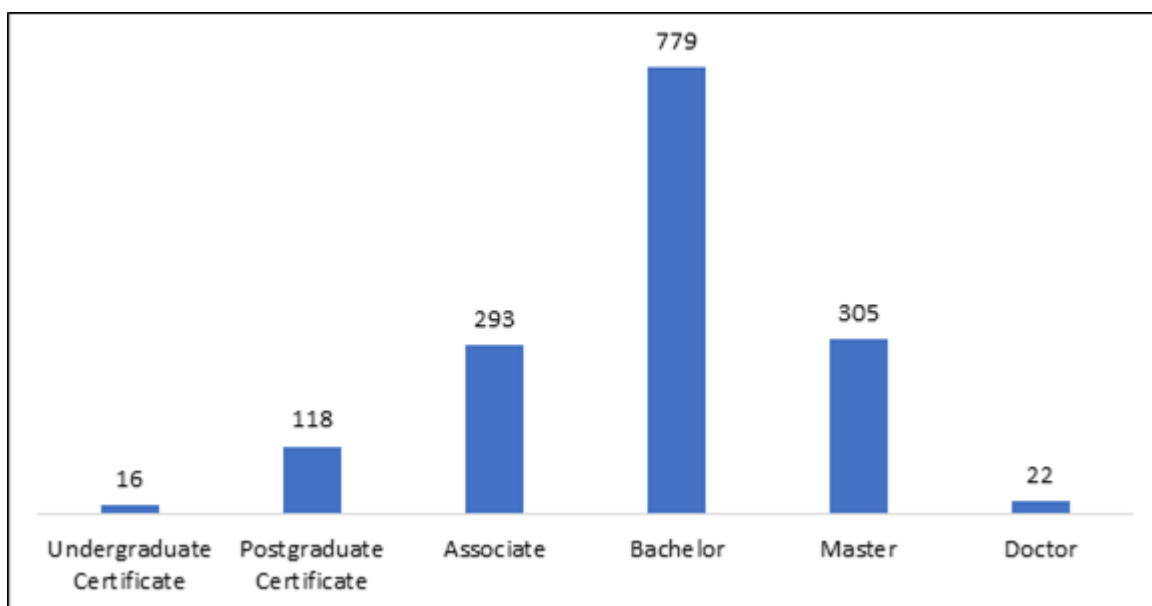
Certain high priority sectors of the economy face specific educational and skill challenges.

Healthcare Providers (Including Behavioral Health)

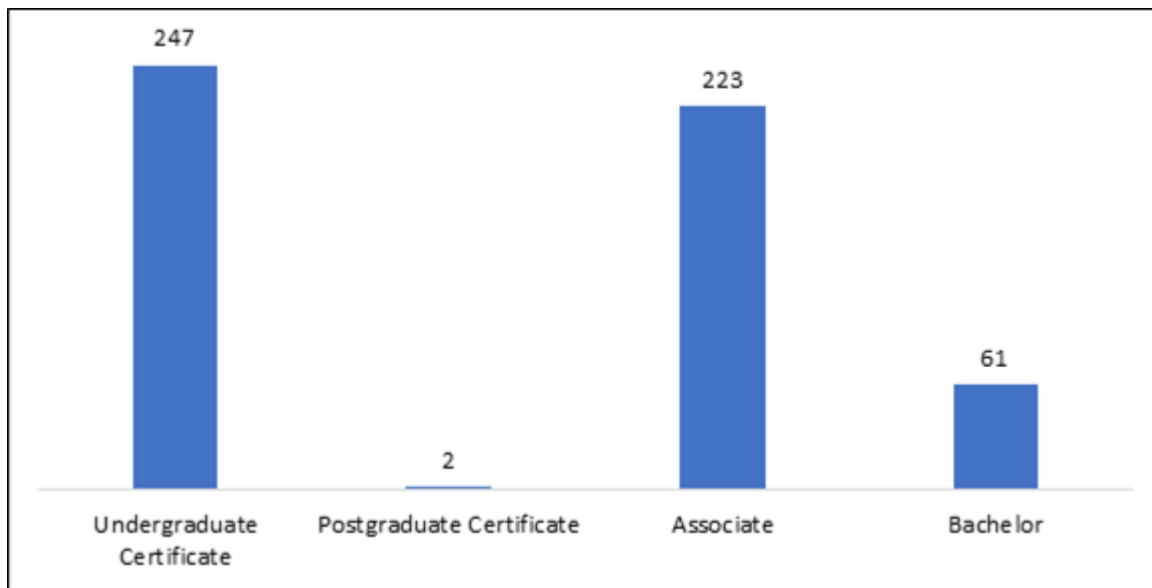
In some areas, such as pharmacy, the state's need for healthcare workers far exceeds the ability of the state's higher education institutions to meet the need, at least in the short run. The New Mexico Health Care Workforce Committee's 2021 Annual Report states that New Mexico, as a whole, has 163 fewer pharmacists than the national benchmark, and assuming no redistribution of the current workforce occurs, an additional 521 pharmacists would be needed for all New Mexico counties to meet the national benchmark. The University of New Mexico has the only School of Pharmacy in the state and in 2021-2022 it conferred 61 Doctorate of Pharmacy degrees ([Exhibit 22](#)). At this rate, assuming no pharmacists leave the profession or the state and that all the graduating pharmacists pass their New Mexico licensing examinations, it will take three years to meet the statewide benchmark and nine years to meet the regional distribution benchmark.



The situation for behavioral health practitioners is similar to healthcare providers overall. The New Mexico Health Care Workforce Committee's 2021 Annual Report indicates that New Mexico as a whole has 34 fewer psychiatrists than the national benchmark, and assuming no redistribution of the current workforce, an additional 117 psychiatrists would be needed for all New Mexico counties to meet the national benchmark. In 2021-2022 the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University combined graduated 22 Doctors of Psychology ([Exhibit 23](#)). Assuming no psychologists leave the profession or the state and that all the graduating psychologists complete their residency requirements and pass their New Mexico licensing examinations, it will take two years to meet the statewide benchmark and six years to meet the regional distribution benchmark. According to New Mexico's WCOS, there were 1,662 advertised job openings for behavioral healthcare providers across the state in July 2023.



To help meet the demand for early childhood workers higher education institutions around the state have programs offering potential early childcare workers the opportunity to earn a credential in the field. In 2021-2022 more than 500 New Mexicans earned such a credential ([Exhibit 24](#)).



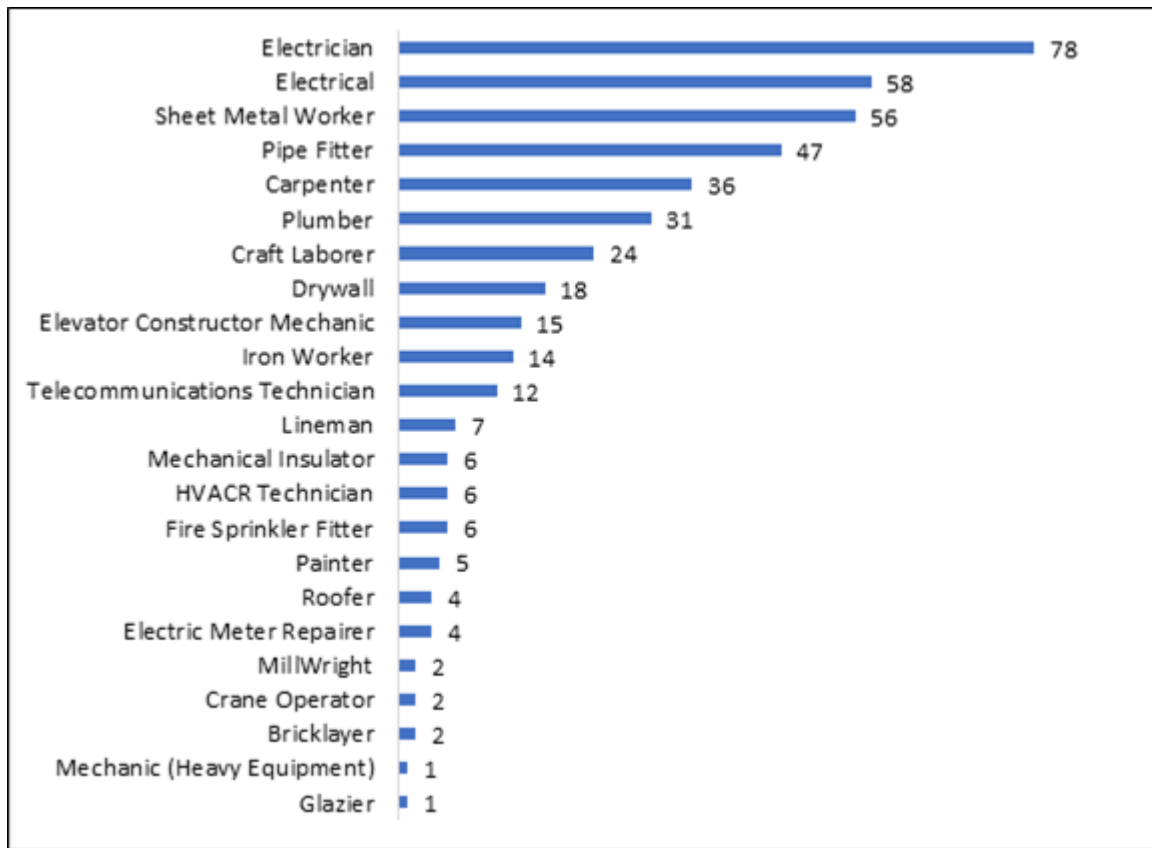
First Responders

The State's workforce is more educationally prepared to meet the demand for first responders. In 2021-2022 more than 500 New Mexicans earn a First Responder credential.³ From 2021 to 2022, the credentials awarded to first responders by New Mexico higher educational institutions included 181 undergraduate certificates, 149 associate's degrees, 197 bachelor's degrees, and 13 master's degrees. In addition, most first responder programs offer training and credentials for recruits.

Vertical and Horizontal Construction

Construction and building is a diverse field that includes architects and planners, drafting and design technicians, construction managers, construction engineers, plumbers, electricians, carpenter, and surveyors.⁴ From 2021 to 2022, the credentials awarded in the construction fields by New Mexico higher educational institutions included 212 undergraduate certificates, 4 post-graduate certificates, 43 associate's degrees, 171 bachelor's degrees, and 68 master's degrees.

In 2021, 196 apprentice candidates successfully completed their construction related apprentice program, in 2022, 239 apprentice candidates had done so ([Exhibit 25](#)). Many of these workers acquired skills that are transferable to other of the fields, such as water infrastructure, energy transition, and climate resilience, that will grow a workforce that supports safe and healthy New Mexican families and communities.



Broadband Expansion

Building, connecting, and maintaining Internet infrastructure, which is required to facilitate broadband expansion throughout the state, involves a complex set of activities, including securing permits and easements, attaching wires and other equipment to poles, and siting wireless facilities. Success requires a well-trained workforce capable of completing these tasks and others associated with broadband expansion. Higher education institutions in New Mexico are preparing students to fill these roles.⁵ Credentials awarded to broadband expansion workers by New Mexico higher education institutions included 292 undergraduate certificates, 3 post-graduate certificates, 237 associate's degrees, 234 bachelor's degrees, and 125 master's degrees.

Water Infrastructure and Natural Resource Management

One area of infrastructure development in which New Mexico's educational profile may lag is in the development of water infrastructure. A major component of ensuring New Mexicans continue to have access to clean, safe, water requires a workforce with requisite skills to maintain water infrastructure throughout the state. Higher education institutions play a key role in ensuring workers are prepared and credentialed to fill these vital roles. Credentials awarded to water infrastructure workers by New Mexico higher education institutions included just 6 undergraduate certificates, 1 post-graduate certificates, 7 associate's degrees, and 12 master's degrees.

Ensuring the sustainable utilization of major natural resources, such as land, water, air, minerals, forests, fisheries, and wild flora and fauna requires workers with the knowledge to act

as stewards of the state's natural resources. Higher education institutions throughout the state prepare students for careers as environmental scientists, foresters, wildlife and fishery managers, as well as earth scientists, petroleum engineers, and mining and mineral engineers. Credentials awarded to broadband expansion workers by New Mexico higher education institutions included 2 undergraduate certificates, 8 associate's degrees, 95 bachelor's degrees, and 22 master's degrees.

Energy transition

The transition to clean energy requires workers in roles that include solar technician, electricians, electrical engineers, electromechanical engineering technicians, and nuclear engineers. Higher education institutions in New Mexico have produced graduates and certificate earners in all of these field. Credentials awarded to energy transition workers by New Mexico higher education institutions included 396 undergraduate certificates, 38 associate's degrees, 106 bachelor's degrees, and 74 master's degrees.

Climate resilience

Climate change is affecting every region of the world, and New Mexico is no exception. For much of 2021, the entire state experienced drought conditions, some 'exceptional' – the most severe category. The long drought is just one example of the warmer, drier climate that anthropogenic climate change is bringing to the Southwestern United States.

New Mexico has already put into place powerful policy tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The combination of policies which have already been implemented since Governor Lujan Grisham took office and the policies currently planned for implementation unlock 30.9 million metric tons (MMT) carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂ e) of reductions by 2030.

However, there remains a significant gap between that achievement and our 2030 goals. In order to reach the Governor's goals, New Mexico will require workers with the knowledge and skills to meet the climate challenge. New Mexico has higher educational programs in ecology, earth science, sustainability, and environmental health engineering. These workers will increase New Mexico's ability to enhance climate resilience in a variety of ways, including helping to meet the Governor's CO₂ reduction goal. Credentials awarded in fields related to climate resilience by New Mexico higher education institutions included 3 undergraduate certificates, 5 associate's degrees, 37 bachelor's degrees, and 11 master's degrees.

Aerospace

According to the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the state's Aerospace industry employs approximately 27,000 workers and accounts for 3.2 percent of total state employment in 2020, up from 2.7 percent in 2010. The overwhelming majority of these jobs are related to research and development in the physical, engineering, and life sciences, which requires highly skilled workers with advanced degrees, and the average annual wage is approximately \$124,000.

To meet the need of the industry, degrees and certificates in Aerospace, Aeronautical, and Astronautical/Space Engineering awarded by higher education institutions in the state will need to increase significantly. Credentials awarded in aerospace fields by New Mexico higher education institutions included 15 undergraduate certificates, 68 bachelor's degrees, and just 2 master's degrees.

Intelligent Manufacturing

Intelligent Manufacturing combines computer science, engineering, and manufacturing to create a diverse high-technology manufacturing industry that ranges from large semiconductor manufacturers to small, family-owned businesses. New Mexicans are able to obtain the skills they need for these roles at higher education institution in the state. Credentials awarded to intelligent manufacturing workers by New Mexico higher education institutions included 244 undergraduate certificates, 274 associate's degrees, 563 bachelor's degrees, 265 master's degrees, and 14 doctorates.

Biosciences

The state's research universities and national labs train and employ a highly talented biosciences workforce, and both public and private institutions have supported the development of a growing number of biosciences startups. Credentials awarded in the biosciences by New Mexico higher education institutions included 89 associate's degrees, 533 bachelor's degrees, 68 master's degrees, and 18 doctorates.

Sustainable and Value-Added Agriculture

Agriculture is an essential component of New Mexico's economy, and pursuing more sustainable and value-added forms of agriculture is a vital pathway to economic development for many rural communities. New Mexico farmers lead the nation in the production of chiles and pecans, and the state's dairy industry ranks among the top ten for milk production and top five for cheese production. Higher education institutions in rural areas of the state offer academic programs in Range Science and Management, Agribusiness/Agricultural Business Operations, Food Technology and Processing, Dairy Science, Greenhouse Operations and Management, and Veterinary/Animal Health Technology/Technician and Veterinary Assistant to ensure New Mexico can meet the labor needs in this key industry. Credentials awarded in these fields by New Mexico higher education institutions included 287 undergraduate certificates, 63 associate's degrees, 153 bachelor's degrees, 23 master's degrees, and 8 doctorates.

C. 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.

The economic and workforce data presented in this Plan suggest a few key takeaways:

- The areas of projected demand based on labor market data vary greatly from the areas that will be in demand based on qualitative and quantitative data from sources that reflect more closely the realities of the post-pandemic New Mexico economy.
- While there will always be demand for service industry workers, the workforce system must focus on the industries and occupations that will build safer, healthier, and stronger communities.
- The educational profile of our state matches well to certain priority sectors, such as construction, first responders, advanced manufacturing, and sustainable and value-added agriculture. In these sectors, the emphasis should be on recruitment, retention, and expansion of current programs, especially in rural areas.

- The educational profile of our state does not meet the needs of other priority sectors, such as healthcare, aerospace, climate resilience, water and natural resource management, and biosciences. In these sectors, the emphasis must be on building a pipeline, establishing clear and accessible educational pathways, and recruiting out-of-state talent to live and work in New Mexico.
- We must attract more people to the labor market. New Mexico's second lowest labor force participation rate in the nation is unacceptable and a hindrance to the economy.
- Businesses require support that is both more focused and more accessible. In this labor market, the competition for workers is fierce. Businesses need help "growing their own" employees, skilling up available and existing employees, and getting their message to the non-participating population.

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. This must include an analysis of—

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 ⁶ and optional one-stop delivery system partners.⁷

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

[7] Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

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.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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

A. The State's Workforce Development Activities.

(i) Title I – Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth

NMDWS receives and administers Title I - Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funds, and passes them through to four local workforce development boards (LWDBs) to provide direct case management services and to fund training and employment services and supports for eligible individuals who have barriers to employment. Services coordinated and presented to businesses by the LWDBs are intended to be customized, and based on the express needs of business, instead of being agency siloed or menu driven. WIOA career services are provided, based on the needs of the customer and may consist of:

- Training services.
- Resume preparation
- Interview preparation
- Career counseling

Business services include:

- Job postings, and assistance writing job descriptions
- Applicant screening and referral of qualified applicants
- Provision of labor law and hiring practices information
- Coordinating and recruiting for hiring events and job fairs, providing a work-space for hiring events
- Classroom training
- Work-based learning opportunities to train incumbent and future workers
- Sharing workforce intelligence with businesses for more informed decision making (i.e., hiring trends, talent pool development, competitive wages and benefits, etc....)
- Coordination with businesses on alignment of sector strategies, critical occupations, skill gaps, and in-demand occupations
- Coordination of programs and services with partner agencies and community resources

LWDBs also provide operational management of the twenty-four Workforce Connection Centers (WCCs) located across the state. Activities include organizing “one-stop” delivery by aligning services and supports with the core programs and combined partners. LWDBs are responsible for design, delivery, and evaluation of effective workforce readiness activities to meet the needs of job seekers and employers. The LWDBs, in consultation with their Chief Elected Officials, determine the location of comprehensive, affiliate or satellite offices that are needed to serve the community both online and in-person. Required core programs, along with other employment and training partners that carry out their program in a local area, are required to share infrastructure costs and LWDBs are required to develop and agree upon a Memorandum of Understanding as a requirement of WIOA to share these costs. As such, the LWDBs convene with core program and partner agencies meet consistently to address

continuous quality improvement by addressing challenges, removing barriers and enhancing the experience for both job seekers and businesses.

(ii) Title II – Adult Education

Adult Education (AE) plays a vital role in New Mexico's workforce development system by providing foundational education necessary for individuals to meet personal goals and access family-sustaining jobs and careers. Adult Education can be meaningfully characterized as one of the state's most important workforce development activities due to the high level of need for service that exists in the state and the connection between educational attainment and economic outcomes in our communities. In 2023, the Barbara Bush Foundation for Literacy ranked New Mexico 50 out of 50 U.S. states for adult literacy. This organization further reports that over 29% of New Mexican adults have low literacy and about 12% lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. These outcomes gravely impact equity and quality of life in our state, leading to higher levels of unemployment and poverty, lower median income levels, and a lack of healthcare access. Adult Education is key in all efforts to strengthen our families and communities, promote equitable access to education and career opportunities, and build a diverse and skilled workforce that meets state demand.

The Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED-AE) oversees the provision of educational services for eligible adults as outlined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). At present, the New Mexico Adult Education system includes a network of 26 local program providers in every workforce region of the state that offer free instruction to eligible adults, including employed, underemployed, and unemployed adults and out-of-school youth ages 16-17 who test below the postsecondary level. The majority (21) of NMHED-AE-funded local Adult Education program providers in New Mexico are postsecondary institutions, three are non-profit organizations, one is a charter school, and one is administered by the New Mexico Department of Corrections. All Adult Education program participants need to develop core academic and/or language skills; most lack a high school diploma or the equivalent and have additional barriers to supporting themselves and their families.

Adult Education provides adult learners with opportunities to strengthen basic literacy skills, including numeracy and digital literacy; prepare to obtain a High School Equivalency (HSE) credential; increase English language proficiency; improve civics skills; prepare to enter the workforce or climb a career ladder; and enroll in Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. Most Adult Education services are provided on site through multiple modalities, including one-to-one instruction, computer-aided instruction, and both small and large group formats. In the post-pandemic era, many providers offer distance learning using various technology platforms.

Supported by WIOA legislation and the resulting enhanced collaboration among core and community partners, Adult Education programs are increasingly working with local agencies and One Stops to strengthen support services and referrals for the benefit of all clients. Similarly, local Adult Education providers and partners are increasingly collaborating with employers and postsecondary institutions to develop meaningful workforce preparation activities, onsite workplace literacy courses, and IET programs. Local adult education programs funded under Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), an additional source of federal funding offered under WIOA Title II, are required to offer workforce preparation and

civics education for the English language learners they serve, further supporting this population's access to employment.

As the first and most important layer of strategic efforts, the Adult Education Division of NMHED-AE supports local programs to provide high-quality services to eligible New Mexico adults. To this end, NMHED-AE engages in monitoring and oversight to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. Adult Education completes an annual risk assessment of every funded local program. The results of the risk assessment are used to schedule site visits of local programs in order of priority. Each local program must receive a full site visit – which is typically conducted in a hybrid modality, with in-person and virtual components – at least once during every four-year grant cycle. NMHED-AE may also conduct targeted site visits. During the full site visit, all main components of the program's administrative and instructional efforts and compliance with state and federal law and regulation are assessed using the Program Monitoring Form. At the end of the site visit, the local program and NMHED-AE collaborate on the development of a Program Enhancement Plan, identifying key areas of improvement that NMHED-AE will monitor over the remaining months of the grant cycle. In cases of serious violations of a grant agreement, NMHED-AE issues a Corrective Action Plan through its Program Probation process. The tools listed here, as well as complete Program Monitoring Guidelines, are provided to programs online at all times at Propelnm.org, NMHED-AE's field-facing, technical support and professional development website.

Finally, NMHED-AE engages in continuous desk monitoring of programs, including soliciting monthly data reports, holding quarterly data check-ins with each program, monthly fiscal reviews of each program, and one-on-one impromptu discussions with local programs about compliance and quality matters.

(iii) Title III – Wagner- Peyser

NMDWS receives and administers the Title III – Wagner-Peyser funds on behalf of the Governor's office. These funds are used to support state staff salaries and AJC infrastructure costs across the state's Workforce Connection Centers (WCCs) to deliver workforce services. A key role of this program is to improve the state's economic vitality by matching employers with career ready individuals. Employment Services staff work collaboratively with the Local Workforce Development Boards, secondary and post-secondary institutions, businesses, state and local stakeholders and partners. The "One-Stop" Workforce Connection Centers' goal is to provide universal access to basic career services to an array of employers, jobseekers, including youth, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Employment Services Division also administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Rapid Response, and Veterans programs. NMDWS receives funding from USDOL to hire and oversee state merit staff responsible for direct delivery of the Wagner Peyser employment services and the other related services to jobseekers and employers. Merit staff is located throughout 26 field offices and the programs are co-located with the WIOA programs in every local board area.

Staff have two primary customers that they are charged with serving: New Mexico businesses who need help with any workforce challenges and job seekers who need help to meet their career goals. The delivery approach includes self-service, staff-assisted services, and involves a

number of other tools and resources coordinated in partnership with the core partners and combined programs including:

Case management is the key service that supports evaluation of skills and abilities, job search and career readiness, access to reemployment services for those receiving unemployment insurance benefits; referrals to core programs and combined partners for paid training, on-the-job-training and supportive services. Wagner Peyser staff in conjunction with other partners in the community provide the following serves to job seekers both in-person and/or virtually:

- Resume and interviewing assistance
- Job referrals to full-and part-time job opportunities
- Orientation to the Workforce Connection Online System that provides job listings and job matching for qualified candidates, career exploration, resume development, and access to labor market information
- Other online job search assistance
- Workshops
- Resume Writing
- Interviewing Skills
- Basic Computer
- Skilled based Assessments
- Resource Center Services
- Free use of phones, fax, copiers, and computers

Business outreach and engagement facilitates job listings and supports recruitment and hiring, Staff assist the business community with the following:

- Assistance in the development of job postings
- Assisting employers with special recruitment needs
- Assessment testing
- Qualified candidate pre-screening
- Assisting employers with hard to fill job orders
- Helping employers deal with layoffs
- Customized training
- Coordination of hiring events
- Coordination of sector strategy
- Apprenticeship development

(iv) Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR and CFB)

New Mexico has two vocational rehabilitation programs – (1) the Commission for the Blind (NMCB) is an independent state agency that serves individuals who are blind or visually impaired; and (2) the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) which is housed within the New Mexico Public Education Department and serves individuals with all other disabilities. Both programs focus on preparing their respective participants for suitable work. NMDVR serves all eligible New Mexicans with disabilities, except for blind or visually impaired vocational rehabilitation participants who are served through NMCB. NMDVR is under an order of selection but is currently serving all eligible individuals and does not have any categories under the order of selection closed. NMCB is not under an order of selection and is serving all eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These programs provide guidance and counseling, transition services, job search and placement, assistive technology, and equipment, as well as other services tailored to the specific needs of their respective clients. NMDVR and NMCB occasionally provide service to mutual participants and work together to avoid duplication of services. Both agencies provide intensive technical assistance and training to the LWDBs to promote disability awareness to ensure ADA compliance of the WCCs, to support the unique business engagement strategies needed to promote employment of individuals with disabilities. A representative from vocational rehabilitation is a member on each of the four LWDBs, and on the SWDB. Vocational rehabilitation is also co-located in each of the comprehensive centers statewide.

DVR and NMCB serve New Mexicans with disabilities toward suitable employment. To be eligible for services an applicant must have a physical or mental impairment, which constitutes a substantial impediment to employment, and can benefit from services in terms of an employment outcome. Services to participants are individualized and are based on a comprehensive evaluation of the person's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. Some of the types of services available include the following:

- Medical, psychological, and vocational evaluations
- Counseling and guidance
- Medical and psychological treatment
- Help with expenses due to participation in rehabilitation
- Job search and placement services
- Transition-to-work services for students with disabilities
- Supported employment
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Rehabilitation technology
- Vocational and other training
- Disability and employment assessments
- Occupational licenses, tools, and other equipment

- Assistance with small-business plan development
- Interpreter services
- Help to maintain work
- Special modifications to vehicles
- Vocational counseling and guidance by vocational rehabilitation counselors is the primary service to participants.

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IEP) is developed in partnership with the participant, and representative or legal guardian, when appropriate. This plan is the basis for what services will be provided, how the services will be provided, the timeline for services and how progress will be measured toward achieving the employment outcome. Any addition or change to planned services, the vocational goal, service providers or timeframes is accomplished by amendment or revision to the service plan, which is again developed and approved by the participant and the vocational rehabilitation counselor. Because each participant's needs and goals are individualized, services provided vary significantly between participants and plans. Services are accessed by participants when needed to achieve employment, such as assessment to determine eligibility and/or vocational rehabilitation needs, referral to services offered by other agencies that can aid in accomplishing vocational goals, interpreter services, rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility services, reader services, job search, placement and retention services.

Barriers to employment are major challenges for participants and are as varied as the participants themselves. Each individual has unique challenges depending on impediments caused by a disability or disabilities; lack of available resources, supports, services and accommodations; socioeconomic factors; lack of family and other natural supports; limited or no access to transportation; a limited job market; attitudinal barriers; cultural barriers; structural barriers and other factors.

(V) Combined Partner Program: Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Education & Training (E&T)

The SNAP E&T Program has the following components included as part of the State Plan, in partnership with Equus, Clovis Community College and Central New Mexico Community College. The New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) used the data reported from the workforce boards statewide to create components that are aligned with New Mexico's occupational needs. This will decrease duplication of efforts made to assist New Mexicans statewide.

Case management is a key piece of the SNAP E&T Program. A provider must clearly document all activities and services provided to a participant in WorkPath and ASPEN. In addition, records must also contain information about the assessment, release of information/consent form (if applicable), EP, participant engagement, and participant reimbursements. A minimum of one monthly contact must be made and case noted. Documentation must be kept under the case note section in WorkPath and ASPEN and is reviewed as part of the annual monitoring visit. Case Management is an ongoing activity throughout the time the participant is enrolled in an E&T component, that can include, but is not limited to:

- Advocating for participants.

- Providing guidance regarding life-coping skills.
- Connecting E&T participants to programs and activities that best meet their employment needs.
- Tracking and documenting progress.
- Making referrals to support services for barrier removal.

Case management enhances the participants ability to participate and be successful in the E&T component(s) to which they are assigned by providing wrap around services. This will be accomplished by incorporating the Whole Family Approach case management model. Case management is tailored to fit the needs of the entire family, to empower the family, to strengthen relationships, establish stability, and achieve their full potential. The Whole Family Approach includes effective case management, application of the One and Done principle as well as coaching and mentoring with the participant. When addressing barriers, these must be reviewed for the entire family. Barriers may require intervention in areas outside the expertise of the provider, or require other resources, the provider will make referrals to an appropriate agency.

A holistic assessment is completed to identify the participants' interests, career goals and any support needs, so that they have the best opportunity for program success. A provider representative will support each E&T participant throughout the period of the E&T program which starts at the assessment and concludes at the successful completion of component(s) or withdrawal. The representative meets virtually or in person with the participant to begin case management services to complete the E&T approved comprehensive employability assessment and to begin developing an employment plan (EP) with appropriate activity tracks that are in line with their present circumstances. This assessment should assess the participant's literacy level and refer the participant to local literacy enhancement programs when appropriate.

Results from the Assessments are used to develop an EP to detail the services to be provided to the participant and the requirements to lead to the successful completion of the component. The EP specifies support services necessary so that the participant can successfully participate and achieve the set goals. EPs must be completed once a year or more frequently if there are any changes.

E&T expenses must be directly related to an approved component. Costs must also be considered reasonable and necessary. The cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, does not exceed that which a prudent person would pay under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Necessary costs are incurred to carry out essential functions, cannot be avoided without adversely affecting program operation, and do not duplicate existing efforts.

SNAP E&T programs include:

- Job Search Training Program - The Job Search Training Program is a component that requires an Orientation, Assessment and Employment Plan. E&T provides Job Search Training with the goal of developing job readiness and accelerating achievement of employment and self-sufficiency for NM's SNAP population. Job Search Training

Includes the following trainings Resume Building, Interviewing Skills with a mock interview and finally Job Skill Development training.

- Work Experience - Work Experience is a component that requires an Orientation, Assessment and Employment Plan. Work Experience Includes the following trainings Resume Building, Interviewing Skills with a mock interview and finally Job Skill Development training.
- Work Activity - Some examples are nursing, medical assistant, mechanical, and welding
- Work-Based Learning – Apprenticeships-high quality career pathways where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. Some examples recognized credentials are nursing, medical assistant, and commercial driver's license.
 - Pre-apprenticeships – Pre=apprenticeships will include any apprenticeship programs offered by employers. This component includes hands on learning. It can help participants improve Literacy, math skills and develop essential work-related skills. Some examples of pre-apprenticeship are nursing, medical assistant, mechanical, and welding.
 - Internships- An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful and practical work related to an individual's field of study or career interest. An internship gives the participant the opportunity for career exploration and development, and to learn new skills. Some skills participants can learn include how to put knowledge and skills learned into practice, the benefits of networking, communication, the benefits of taking feedback and more. Some examples of internships are nursing, medical assistant, mechanical, and welding.
 - On the Job Training - The purpose of OJT is to encourage public, private nonprofit, or private employers to hire an individual or upgrade an eligible employed worker who would not otherwise qualify for the job, and to teach the skills required to perform the job. By employers providing participants with the skills necessary to complete their work duties and teaching them their rules and policies they are more likely to be successful and retain employment. Participants will learn the employer's expectations, Industry knowledge, Customer service, project management and more. Some examples are nursing, managerial, call centers, retail, and computer technology.
- Career and Technical Education - Organized activities at the post-secondary level that provide individuals with the academic and technical knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for further education and for careers in current or emerging employment sectors. Programs are primarily designed for those who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance. Ideally, such programs should be employer driven and lead to industry-recognized certificates or credentials.

- English Language Acquisition - Is designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language.
- High School Equivalent Education Programs - Designed to offer academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment. Such programs include Adult Basic Education (ABE), basic literacy, and high school equivalency.

(vi) *Combined Partner Program: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*

The TANF Program is administered by HSD and works in collaboration with NMDWS. The collaboration allows for case management to be provided to mandatory TANF customers. NMDWS administers the New Mexico Works Program, which is designed to facilitate:

- Barrier removal to transition TANF participants to opportunities of increased self-sufficiency
- Continuous and universal engagement of all TANF participants
- Progression of activities for TANF participants to help them achieve employment that provides living wages, benefits, and vertical job promotion
- Acknowledgement and formal recognition of participants achieving specific goals and milestones towards meeting those goals

The New Mexico Works team ensures that all activities are available to participants referred to the program, as determined appropriate for their circumstances through Assessments and interviews with the caseworker. The caseworker assesses a participant's readiness to work and need for additional training and supports in order to become self-sufficient and will plan with each participant appropriate activities ultimately leading to employment.

The New Mexico Works Career Consultants coordinate and deliver comprehensive one-and-done services to TANF participants as they work towards self-sufficiency and eventual TANF closure. Our process includes:

- Program Orientation, intake and assessments that focus on the strengths, career interests, work skills, and the abilities of each participant. A comprehensive program orientation is conducted with every new referral to the NMW Program, providing participants with information regarding hour and compliance requirements, limited participation requests, subsidized employment opportunities, educational programs, rights and responsibilities, transitional employment support, and support services.
- Family Support Planning (FSP) that identifies whole family challenges and areas that may impact successful work participation, including community referrals designed to address specific barriers.

- Case management through coaching and mentoring strategies that identify the goals of each participant and their efforts to become self-sufficient and overcome barriers that may pose challenges to successfully reaching their goals.
- Determine the need for support services and understanding lifetime resource limits to assist with educational, transportation, and employment needs. This includes assessing for and need of a Chromebook to support successful online course certification attainment, job search / Job readiness activity completion, family stabilization activity completion through barrier removal, and family support needs.
- Referrals for community resource agencies assisting with barrier removal and/or mediation include, but are not limited to the following:
 - English as a Second Language (ESL)
 - Accelerated College and Career Education (ACCE)
 - Employment Services (ES)
 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - Workforce Connection Center (WCC) partner services
 - Housing
 - Childcare
 - Domestic Violence (DV)
 - Mental and Physical Health
 - Higher Education and High School Equivalency (HSE)
 - Lutheran Family Services (LFS)
 - Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
 - Work & Family Support Bureau (WFSB)

TANF programs include:

- Vocational Training (VT) - The TANF Vocational Training program is offered at 21 higher education institutions across New Mexico. The participant works with an Educational Coordinator to ensure they are on track for graduation and a Vocational Training Development Career Coach (VTCC) employed through the Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) throughout the program to prepare them for a career upon graduation.
- Accelerated College and Career Education Program (ACCE) - This program assists individuals to earn a High School Equivalency (HSE) certificate. ACCE staff provide individuals direct support to ensure they are on track to transition to a post-secondary education career. UNM provides payment for the HSE testing for participants in the program.

- Early Childhood Program - This program provides childcare assistance while the participant maintains employment or attends school. Participants who are pregnant with children up to 5 years of age can receive home visits. This helps with education on child development, connections to community support, emotional support and resources for domestic violence.
- Career Link - This program offers subsidized wages for employment in the private sector and includes case management and employment services for recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Career Link is subsidized employment for a 6-month term. At the end of the term, the work site has agreed to hire the participant. The goal of the Career Link Program is to create a bridge to unsubsidized employment; allow the individual to gain marketable skills while providing support to address barriers; increase participant's income and give them access to the Earned Income Tax Credit; make training available and address skill attainment; provide intensive support, mentoring and engagement; and end dependency of needy parents by promoting educational support and job preparation.
- Wage Subsidy - This program offers subsidized wages for employment in the public sector. Unlike Career Link, participants in the Wage Subsidy Program participate in full time employment instead of receiving the monthly benefit. This program promotes self-sufficiency through paid work and provides entry level training to the participants. Wage Subsidy participants' responsibilities will often change according to the needs of the specific job site and employer. Responsibilities may include but are not limited to customer service, phones, scanning, filing and/or data entry. Participants employed in this program work 40 hours per week and the term of the position is 12 months. While in the program, participants will continue to qualify for Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Support Services – TANF provides a wide array of support services.
- Transportation reimbursement - Except for those in paid employment, participants may be reimbursed for transportation costs incurred in meeting participation requirements.
- Educational reimbursement - If no other funding is available, participants may be reimbursed for certain educational costs. Reimbursable costs include fees, books, and supplies. Tuition does not qualify for reimbursement.
- Employment-related reimbursement - Participants who have a verified job offer may be reimbursed or receive an advance payment for certain costs necessary to accept or retain employment. Allowable costs include but are not limited to special clothing, licensing fees, vehicle repairs and tools. Payments are limited to a one-time payment totaling no more than \$300.

The Education Works Program is available to TANF-Eligible participants seeking to improve their ability to find gainful employment through educational programs. The purpose of the NMW program is to improve the quality of life for parents and children by increasing family income, resources, and support. The further purpose of the program is to increase family income through family employment and child support and by utilizing cash assistance as a support service to enable and assist parents to participate in employment. The objective of the

education works program (EWP) is to provide financial assistance to a benefit group where at least one individual is enrolled in a post-secondary, graduate, or post-graduate institution. Education and training are essential to long-term career development. Participants enrolled in the Education Works Program will focus on earning a two- or four-year degree. The Education Works Program has a 24-month lifetime limit unless extensions are granted. The participant would be otherwise eligible for NMW cash assistance but chooses to participate in EWP.

(vii) Combined Partner Program: Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)

The TAA program is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid to U.S. workers who have lost their jobs because of foreign trade. A petition must be filed with the U.S. Department of Labor by or on behalf of a group of workers who have lost or may lose their jobs or experienced a reduction in wages because of foreign trade. After the USDOL Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance investigates the facts behind the petition, it applies statutory criteria to determine whether foreign trade was an important cause of the threatened or actual job loss or wage reduction. The TAA Program seeks to provide adversely affected workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to build skills for future jobs. Any member of a worker group certified by the Department may be eligible to receive the following benefits and services at a Workforce Connection Center: training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

TAA Case Managers offer a variety of benefits and services to support workers in their search for reemployment, including review of local employment opportunities and labor market knowledge to match impacted workers with employment referrals that fit their skills and needs, case managers also provide opportunities to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed and marketable within their communities with assistance in enrolling in local colleges or online training programs. Case managers refer and encourage co-enrollment into partner programs for wraparound services. The program benefits and services available to individual workers are administered by the State. Program eligibility, technical assistance, and oversight are conducted by state merit staff.

(viii) Combined Partner Program: Jobs for Veteran State Grants (JVSG)

NMDWS receives federal formula funding to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program. Funds are used to hire staff to provide individualized career and training – related services to veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment and to assist employers fill their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans. The JVSG program supports the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist position, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and Consolidated Position staff. DVOP specialists provide individualized career services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Veterans with barriers include homeless veterans and vocational rehabilitation clients. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and encourage the hiring of disabled veterans.

(ix) Combined Partner Program: Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides on-the-job assignments with non-profit and government agencies. These assignments are half-time, minimum wage positions designed to provide training and skills acquisition to workers over 55 years of age with barriers to employment. In addition, the program may provide other training in classrooms or other venues.

(x)Other Partner Agency: New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED)

Public Education (K-12) is a vital partner in meeting the state's overall education and training objectives. Educating children through programs that focus on specific skills or competencies that prepare them for post-secondary education and the workforce. NMPED receives Carl D. Perkins funds to support Career Technical Education to local school districts and community colleges; as well as training and technical assistance for academic and career advisors who provide career exploration and job readiness to high school and community college students statewide, NMPED also oversees Advanced Placements, International Baccalaureate, and dual credit programming statewide. Students enrolled in these programs have the opportunity to take college level courses while attending high school both on site and at the universities/ community colleges. CTE course offerings are aligned by industry clusters and align to career pathways that are high demand, high skill or result in a high living wage and incorporate dual credit. Advanced Placement, and work-based learning capstones. Students enrolled in these courses can earn college credits as well as certificates and credentials for specific industries.

(xi)Other Partner Agency: Indian and Native American Programs (INA)

Indian and Native American Programs are funded to support employment and training activities for pueblo and tribal communities. Funded grantees in New Mexico include Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc.; Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council; Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos, Inc.; Jicarilla Apache Tribe; Mescalero Apache Tribe; National Indian Youth Council; Ohkay Owingeh; Pueblo of Acoma; Pueblo of Isleta; Pueblo of Laguna; Pueblo of Taos; Pueblo of Zuni; Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc.; and Santo Domingo Tribe. NMDWS, as the SAE, is working collaboratively with these entities to align workforce system development activities within their regions. Specific partnership activities include technical assistance and training, coordination of economic development activities, and specific sector strategies to ensure their community members are engaged and provided opportunities for employment and training services. NMDWS plans to convene with the programs to share resources and tools as well as address challenges and engage in joint strategic planning and evaluation to align work more comprehensively with the state plan.

(xii)Other Partner Agency: Job Corps

A USDOL vocational training program for disadvantaged youth and young adults, is a required partner in the one-stop delivery system. Job Corps participants receive social, academic, career and technical education, and service-learning opportunities, primarily in a residential setting. Program objectives focus on participants obtaining secondary school diplomas or recognized credentials leading to careers in high-demand industries or occupations. Job Corps representatives sit on local boards, the boards outreach to potential program participants through their Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth providers, and referrals are received from Workforce Connection Center partner programs.

(xiii)Other Partner Agency: AmeriCorps Program

The AmeriCorps program, which is administratively housed within the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, is guided by a bipartisan board of Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, that provide oversight and accountability for grants that lead to volunteer initiatives throughout the state. The funding provides opportunities for adult individuals with a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate to make an intensive commitment to a service project for up to two years. Per a report published by the Corporation for National and Community Service, community service helps individuals gain increased social connections, and increased skills and experience that lead to potential future job opportunities and employment. For instance, AmeriCorps Members have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers. Four things workforce system partners can do to promote AmeriCorps service are:

- Learn more about how community service can be helpful to jobseekers.
- Promote community service as a strategy for finding work on state and local board websites, newsletters, and other materials provided through Workforce Connection Centers.
- Help clients emphasize their community and/or volunteer service in terms of work experience.
- Explore ways to use and work with the AmeriCorps program to connect people to job opportunities.

In addition, most AmeriCorps members receive student loan deferment, training, a living allowance and may receive health insurance. Program completers also receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to help pay for college, graduate school, or vocational training or to repay student loans. Finally, USDOL acknowledges in guidance to states, Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 16-12 issued April 19, 2012, that volunteerism can be a viable and successful strategy to support reemployment and does not need to interfere with unemployment compensation recipients' responsibilities to be able and available for work and actively seeking work.

B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

New Mexico's workforce system depends on the commitment to partnership among the core programs and combined partner agencies. Under the leadership of Governor Lujan Grisham, all agencies are expected to work collaboratively and comprehensively. The core programs and combined partners have strengthened communication and information sharing, and all partners are dedicated to assuring that workforce policies, programs and practices are linked in meaningful and productive ways. The following are strengths and weaknesses at a state level, which DWS gathered through the comprehensive stakeholder engagement process in May through September 2023.

Overall, participants in our stakeholder engagement sessions categorized New Mexico's workforce system as between Substandard and Reactive on the maturity scale, citing common themes of fragmented services, lack of coordination between agencies, and duplication of efforts. Participants used words with both negative and positive connotations to describe the current state of New Mexico's workforce system when asked to complete a poll. Some described

it as hopeful and inclusive, while others described it as regulation-driven, complicated, disjointed, and siloed.

1. *Strengths*

- Ongoing commitment to design, planning and implementation among core programs and combined partner agencies to enhance and strengthen the workforce system.
- Enhanced integration of programs and services within each workforce region. All four local boards are facilitating ongoing meetings to design and implement services and business engagement. Current efforts include sector strategy partnerships that includes coordination with all the required partners.
- Successful development of a Common Unique Identifier across core programs, including Unemployment Insurance (UI), Wagner-Peyser and TANF/SNAP, to guide and inform service delivery and enhance coordination. Currently, UI information is being shared with local workforce boards to provide outreach and support for individuals receiving benefits. Silos have been eliminated between TANF/SNAP and Wagner-Peyser staff providing the ability to coordinate basic career services and business outreach.
- NMDWS successful implementation of 24/7 online access to workforce development resources and tools for job seekers and business; including a career exploration program specifically designed for youth and young adults.
- Shared partnership with the Public Education Department, including a dedicated liaison, to increase access to work-based learning opportunities for youth enrolled in Career Technical Education statewide.
- Growing expertise at the operational level via the core partners' staffs, which, along with the commitment to help people, provides a strong base to build and support partnerships with training providers, youth serving organizations and agencies and Tribal communities, which will lead to greater and improved access to services.
- The annual Workforce Development Conference designed for front line staff. Conferences focus on best and promising practices in career advisement and planning, sector strategy development, career pathway programming, strategies for coordination of services at local level, and sharing success stories and lived experiences.
- A Governor with a clear vision for workforce development. The path has been clearly articulated, which helps to facilitate coordination and organization among the various core programs and combined partners agencies.
- With 26 programs located throughout the state and in all four workforce regions, Adult Education offers adults the opportunity to reach postsecondary skill levels, improve English language proficiency, and attain a high school credential for free.
- Adult Education teachers are skilled at meeting adults where they are, maintaining a student-centered and individualized approach to service and maintaining flexibility in recognition of the barriers that many working adults face in furthering their education.

- All New Mexico Adult Education programs offer distance learning options, which accommodates learner needs and encourages persistence.
- Learner outcomes in adult education are improving statewide. Outcomes on all indicators increased significantly in the 2022-2023 program year, as programs enrolled more students, demonstrated higher learner gains and higher rates of high school equivalency (HSE) completion. Performance on all primary performance indicators exceeded federal targets and were the highest outcomes in the last five fiscal years.
- The Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department has instituted a robust professional learning policy, invested in the creation of a professional development system, and is focusing on instructional quality and paid professional development as a strategy for retention of both teachers and students.
- Because most local Adult Education providers are postsecondary institutions, Adult Education students benefit from being exposed to postsecondary culture and have the opportunity to become comfortable with it and positively influenced by it. Adult Education students are programmatically introduced to education and training opportunities and career pathways that they might not otherwise learn about.
- Local Adult Education program providers work hard to build student confidence and to offer ample support and resources to enable students to pursue these pathways, including warm handoffs to institutional support services and programmatic access points.
- Throughout the workforce system, Adult Education has strong partnerships with community-based organizations and One Stop centers, providing additional layers of support and opportunity.
- A key strategy and strength in New Mexico Adult Education is Integrated Education and Training (IET). This evidence-based national model, which incorporates academic skills development, workforce preparation, and workforce training. The development and implementation of a state policy and application for IET programs, state participation in national professional development around IET design and implementation, and a recent infusion of funds from the State of New Mexico earmarked for IET have all contributed to enhancement of existing IETs and an increase of new programs. This model is a key tool for Adult Education in serving the needs of employers and serving student needs for high-quality and time-efficient academic and workforce training.
- The current capacity for data collection, reporting and case management documentation has given certain workforce programs the ability to truly evaluate services provided and their impact on wages and employment rates. Data is being used to develop a Career Ready service delivery model that provides job seekers with robust wrap around services. Data has also assisted with identifying service overlaps with partner agencies that provide similar services. This has led to discussions about co-locating SNAP and TANF staff within AJCs across the state.
- Core Programs and Combined Partners have demonstrated strength in quickly responding to the needs of employers, job seekers and partner organizations. This capacity allows for temporarily shifting staff from one office to another or bringing

together multiple offices to assist with large statewide or regional events. Recent examples include the statewide rapid hire initiative which yielded more than 3,000 job interviews over four days. Each regional office participated in a coordinated remote interview process that allowed local job seekers access to hundreds of state agency jobs.

- Relationships with other state agencies who offer similar services are an emerging strength. Examples include a project to utilize Rapid Response dollars in partnership with the State's Economic Development Department. The partnership includes co-funding specialists who can assess business vulnerabilities and provide services as a layoff aversion strategy. A partnership with the Child Support Enforcement Division provides non-custodial parents with services that help them find a good job and fulfill child support obligations. Staff from NM's SNAP program are working with ES leadership to co-fund staff that will be placed in AJCs across the state.
- Leadership at the local and state level is robust and provides stability to the system. This experience and historical knowledge provides for sound and reflective decision making.
- Staff training is an emerging strength across the workforce system. For example, NMDWS Employment Services management has developed a robust training program for career consultants, DVOPs and LVERs.
- SNAP E&T has been retooled and is expanding. This is the first time that the Human Services Department is contracting with three providers that will provide case management and support services to New Mexicans statewide. HSD, supported by Equus and two community colleges, undertakes Job Search Training, Work Experience and the Educational Program. All three providers share the same vision and goals to help New Mexicans meet their employment or educational goals to become self-sufficient.
- HSD recently created a new unit to focus solely on those participants who are not considered work ready for complete participation in the TANF work program. This unit is family centered and operates under the Whole Family Approach case management model. Staff on this team are tasked with identifying barriers of all the household members and finding innovative ways to encourage positive growth at the individual and family level. HSD also partners with NM DWS to provide educational and employment centered case management to those who do not need the intensive case management services and can fully participate in the TANF work program.

2. *Weaknesses and Challenges*

- Communication of our services was the number one weakness identified across all workforce programs. An intentional communication strategy would also better market the mission of the One-Stops and build a stronger understanding of available services.
- Employer engagement is a missing piece in the workforce development puzzle. In the Public Education Department (PED), for example, they are desperate to have employer/industry voices in workforce development discussions. The efforts to coordinate these conversations do not happen enough, leading to siloed efforts.

- While there are a variety of resources and incentives to benefit employers, they are more easily accessible to larger businesses or those who do not necessarily need free services. These benefits are not easily accessible to smaller businesses or those employers who could benefit from them the most.
- Policy and programmatic limitations from state and federal mandates. While the Core Programs and Combined Partners are committed to integration of services, tools and resources, limitations imposed by competing rules and regulations slows progress. Issues such as co-enrollment and shared data are hampered by competing program reporting requirements that oftentimes do not match across programs. For example, in TANF, not all activities fall under the defined core activities outlined by the federal government, which creates a barrier to participants and also hinders NM from meeting the federal Work Participation Rates (WPR).
- Gaps exist that prohibit or create barriers to serving certain people, such as those who do not meet the income eligibility criteria.
- American Job Centers need physical upgrades that would contribute to a more professional setting.
- New Mexico has four regional workforce areas, each with unique concerns and challenges in relationship to geography (ie, urban, rural and frontier), employment opportunities, culture and language needs that span highly concentrated Native American populations to border communities, transportation challenges, and limited childcare – these unique needs present challenges in program design, planning and implementation.
- Insufficient funding to address the unique needs across the state. New Mexico lacks any meaningful state financial contribution to the workforce system.
- Lack of diverse opportunities at the service delivery level to offer job seekers in rural/frontier areas of the state. (statement here of NM geography).
- Maintaining consistent and stable staff across core programs and combined partner agencies; for instance, low salary scheduled for state employees, impacting recruitment and hiring for both Wagner-Peyser and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff.
- Though Title II instructional services are high-quality and impactful, they are not meeting a sizeable percentage of the need for services in the state due to limited funding and associated limited capacity in local programs. While it is certainly true that local providers have limited capacity to serve the large numbers of those in need, it is equally true that a host of challenging barriers that likely contributed to creating the skills gap in the first place are still at play, now compounded by the inherent challenge faced by working adults with multiple life demands and limited time and resources to meet them.
- Adult Education program providers are challenged to serve students with a wide variety of skill levels, ranging from those who struggle to read and perform basic arithmetic to those who are almost college ready. Doing this with a large percentage of part time instructors who are sometimes marginally compensated is difficult and makes forming

and maintaining partnerships with community organizations and workforce entities more challenging.

- Generally, teacher pay in New Mexico Adult Education is strikingly low compared to salaries in the K-12 educational system and other comparable professions, threatening teacher retention and therefore instructional quality over time.
- New Mexico has never had credentialing requirements or a certification for Adult Education instructors. The NMHED Adult Education Division, in partnership with Propel, our AE professional learning system, is in the process of creating a teaching induction/credentialing system as a first step toward the goal of having a state certification for AE teachers by 2026.
- The digital divide within New Mexico is a weakness that keeps potential program participants and students, particularly those in rural areas, from accessing our services consistently.
- The small and decreasing number of HSE testing centers in New Mexico, in addition to a lack of state funding to staff them adequately and stand up more centers, is a statewide weakness that must be addressed in order to provide adults access to the HSE diploma.
- Adult Education must work more closely with other core title partners at the state and local levels to ensure access for our students to Title I funding, enabling payment of tuition and training fees for these students. At this time, accessing these funds through an application process is consistently problematic and the processes vary from region to region.
- It is important to note that adult English language learners and those enrolled in IELCE-funded programs often struggle to find IET and workplace learning programs in which to meaningfully participate, as restrictive immigration policies limit their employment options. Professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries are meant to be served in Adult Education's IELCE programs, but there are few paths for these individuals to practice in their fields, which is a lost opportunity for New Mexico. In addition, students who have yet to obtain proper documentation are often unable to identify a clear path to green card eligibility. This hinders the system's ability to train and place them in family-sustaining careers.
- The lack of a streamlined referral system statewide among core WIOA partner programs and the lack of a shared data system to enable more efficient and effective communication and tracking are key challenges to Adult Education's ability to implement our activities effectively.
- Adult Education recognizes that in order for the state to reach and include less-engaged populations in the labor force, all core partners need to intentionally understand and address the complex barriers they are facing. Behavioral health and social service providers are not currently named as partners in the Plan, and it will take a coordinated effort to support individuals re-entering the workforce. Without focused intervention, it is likely that barriers such as being precariously housed, having a substance dependence, or experiencing mental health challenges will continue to negatively effect retention and persistence of adult education students.

- Workforce partners often do not understand or have an up-to-date comprehension of funding allowability.
- Central planning and coordination at the state level to create a strong network of industry-responsive career pathway training options—especially those open to Adult Education students—is slowly taking shape, but in early stages. Core partners are currently working together to tackle these issues, which all recognize as large system weaknesses.

(C)State Workforce Development Capacity

1. Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth

WIOA programs are designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market by matching employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. New Mexico's services are coordinated and delivered through the Workforce Connection Centers located throughout the state. The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, in coordination with the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, are pivotal pieces of the one-stop delivery system, and the foundation of the workforce system. The one-stop system provides universal access to basic career services and coordination of individualized training services to eligible participants.

NMDWS receives funds from the U.S. Department of Labor that are passed through to Local Chief Elected Officials – CEOs, (ie, mayors, county commissioners), who together with the four Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are charged with making policy decisions for their area to address the workforce needs of their citizens and residents. The CEO's service as the recipient of the grant funds; they manage the federal investments at the local level that are intended to serve Title I services for adults, dislocated workers and youth. CEO's appoint a fiscal agent to manage the funds; appoint local workforce board members, approve local board budget and consult with Governor and State Workforce Development Board on matters related to area designation, local board governance, quality and effectiveness of service delivery and coordination of the local one-stop center network.

Decisions at the local level are driven by the analysis of labor market data and other business information. LWDBs convene meetings with relevant stakeholders to map out the available resources, services and programs that are needed to support local and regional industry and sector partnerships, day-to-day operations and the needs of the community. This is all accomplished through strong leadership that communicate a vision with all stakeholders, throughout all levels of the workforce system and across partner and community organizations.

DWS supplies access to the Workforce Connection Online System (WCOS). This system gives employers access to a database of job seekers in NM. Employers can enter, update, and archive job listings securely. The New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System is available free of charge to employers and jobseekers. Employers can post their own jobs or provide job listing information to Workforce Connection Center staff for the matching and referral of qualified job seekers.

Workforce Connection Center staff, along with core programs and combined partners, can access both employer job listings and job seeker accounts entered into the system. The job listing information allows Workforce Connection Center staff, core programs and combined partners to evaluate the hiring requirements of the employer, as well as the qualifications of the job seeker.

The workforce system also supports employers by providing customized screening and referral of qualified participants in career and training services to employers; customized employment-related services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations on a fee-for-service basis that are in addition to labor exchange services available to employers under Wagner-Peyser; and, activities to provide business services and strategies that meet the workforce investment needs of area employers, as determined by the local boards and consistent with their local plans.

2. Title II – Adult Education

The capacity of the Adult Education (AE) system to carry out our workforce development activities is increasing. State investment in AE has increased recently and the Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED-AE) has strategically increased the system's capacity to serve New Mexico adults through heavy investment in professional development and a statewide push toward teacher retention. NMHED-AE has also greatly increased the use of free high school equivalency vouchers around the state and is engaging in coordination of the state's HSE testing centers using non-AEFLA state funding. NMHED-AE has a newly created Integrated Education and Training (IET) policy and application, designed to improve IET numbers, quality and compliance statewide, and is investing in professional development and technical assistance around IET implementation, which is raising the system's capacity to provide these high-quality learning experiences for students.

Nonetheless, AE faces continued capacity challenges. Though instructional services are high-quality and impactful, they are not meeting a sizeable percentage of the need for services in the state due to limited funding and associated limited capacity in local programs. While it is certainly true that local providers have limited capacity to serve the large numbers of those in need, it is equally true that a host of challenging barriers that likely contributed to creating the skills gap in the first place are still at play, now compounded by the inherent challenge faced by working adults with multiple life demands and limited time and resources to meet them. While resources are increasing, they remain limited enough to contribute to shortages of materials, funding for often-costly IET but effective programs, essential wraparound services for students, and difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, key career navigators, and administrative positions such as data technicians.

Finally, lack of capacity to provide or connect students to needed wrap-around services, including transportation, childcare, medical, behavioral health, and disability support services is problematic and must be addressed through partnership and increased resources in the coming years.

3. Title III- Wagner Peyser

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions also administers Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, which it does from the state level through its Employment Services Division, along with the administration of Trade Adjustment Assistance, Work Opportunity Tax

Credit, Rapid Response, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments program and Veterans programs. NMDWS receives funding from USDOL to hire and oversee state merit staff responsible for direct delivery of the Wagner Peyser employment services and the other related services to jobseekers and employers. Merit staff is located throughout 26 field offices and the programs are co-located with the WIOA programs in every local board area.

Employment Services are provided as part of the one-stop delivery system. Currently, each local workforce development area has at least one comprehensive workforce development center that includes, at a minimum, three partners: WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, Wagner- Peyser Employment Services, and access to Unemployment Insurance services. Each Employment Services field office is assigned a Wagner -Peyser Area Manager who ensures the workforce centers are universally accessible, customer centered, and training is job-driven with an emphasis in career pathways. This includes providing easy access to and assistance with workforce related activities: such as assisting employers in recruiting talent, exploring work preparation and career development services for job seekers, as well as making a seamless referral to WIOA employment for on-the-job-training, and occupational training programs. Employment Services staff follow required guidelines regarding referral and placement.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions maintains an Employment Services Manual, a handbook providing standard operating procedures for the administration of Wagner Peyser Employment Services and to highlight how these services support the primary mission of the State's workforce system. The guide, which establishes a comprehensive resource for Employment Service information and operational guidance, communicates expectations for program design and service delivery, and ensures a consistent level of service. In order that Wagner-Peyser is successful in the implementation of its policies, all Wagner-Peyser Area Managers will be trained consistently in program policies and are required to hold office staff accountable for the proper service delivery of programs in their respective regions.

4. Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR & NMCB)

NMDVR and NMCB serve New Mexicans with disabilities toward competitive integrated employment. Services to participants are individualized and are based on a comprehensive evaluation of the person's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. Vocational counseling and guidance by vocational rehabilitation counselors is the key service to participants. An Individualized Plan for Employment is developed in partnership with the participant, and representative or legal guardian, when appropriate. This plan is the basis for what services will be provided, how the services will be provided, the timeline for services and how progress will be measured toward achieving the employment outcome. Because each participant's needs and goals are individualized, services provided vary significantly between participants and plans. Services are accessed by participants when needed to achieve employment, such as assessment to determine eligibility and/or vocational rehabilitation needs, referral to services offered by other agencies that can aid in accomplishing vocational goals, interpreter services, rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility services, reader services, job search, placement and retention services.

5. Combined Partner Program: Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Education & Training (E&T)

The SNAP E&T program provides services statewide. Equus oversees the Job Search Training and Work Activity components for the entire state. They have offices located in Albuquerque and Las Cruces but will provide services in person as well as virtual. The two community colleges provide services in Albuquerque and Clovis. If they offer online courses these may be completed statewide. HSD to Providers etc.

6. *Combined Partner Program: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*

Case management for TANF participants is offered statewide. Both DWS and HSD have case management staff in various field offices throughout the state and are readily available to provide services and program access to all TANF participants.

7. *Combined Partner Program: Trade Adjustment Assistance Program*

The state receives federal funding to hire merit staff to provide trade benefits in 15 of the 25 local workforce connection offices statewide. In the remaining 6 offices where a TAA case manager is not present there is a trained Wagner Peyser Merit Staff appropriately informed of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program and is able to provide guidance to possible eligible participants when necessary and the use of technology allows state merit staff in offices to assist each other in providing services. Staff use the workforce connection online system for case management and activity tracking.

8. *Combined Partner Program: Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (JVSG)*

NMDWS receives federal formula funding to administer the JVSG program to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment and to assist employers fill their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans. The JVSG program supports the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist position, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and Consolidated Position staff. DVOP specialists provide individualized career services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Veterans with barriers include homeless veterans and vocational rehabilitation clients. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and encourage the hiring of disabled veterans.

DVOP specialists and LVER staff are appropriately integrated at the local Workforce Connection Centers. They are included among the other required partner program staff that are co-located within the centers, to provide online and/or in-person workforce development and support services as part of the workforce development system. NMDWS makes optimal use of the services and linkages to other veteran service providers in the state to enhance the employability and placement of veterans seeking employment and training related services. Formalized partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding exist with the Veterans Administration Vocational and Rehabilitation and Employment program office, Veterans Court in the 2nd Judicial District Court, Goodwill Industries-HVRP, New Mexico Veterans Integration Center, University of New Mexico Veterans' Resource Center, Los Alamos National Laboratories to fulfill Jobs for Veterans mandates. The JVSG program should continue to forge partnerships with other veterans' service providers, such as the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves, state

rehabilitation programs, and colleges' veterans' resource centers, particularly wherever collocation is beneficial.

9. *Combined Partner Program: Senior Community Services Employment Service Program (SCSEP)*

New Mexico has been providing SCSEP services in New Mexico for as long as the program has been in operation. The capacity to continue these services is well-established.

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.

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 employment⁸ and other populations.⁹

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

[8] Individuals with barriers to employment include 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; eligible migrant and seasonal 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.

[9] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, 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.)

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.

1. Vision

Our vision is a coordinated and streamlined workforce system that empowers all New Mexicans to provide for themselves and their families through meaningful jobs and careers; helps employers find the talent they need to flourish in New Mexico; and is ready for the changing economy of our state and nation.

2. Goals

The Combined State Plan goals center on how the State prepares an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, and meets the skilled workforce needs of employers. The goals also underscore the importance of attracting talent to New Mexico and improving the vitality of rural communities, as well as equipping all New Mexicans with the skills and tools needed to succeed in the future of work.

Goal 1: Collaborate with employers to expand the workforce that supports the safety, health, and well-being of New Mexican families and the modernization of New Mexico's infrastructure.

This goal is focused on building a State in which families can thrive. Several factors have increased the urgency of investments in the industries identified within this goal. First, New Mexico has historically not looked at current vacancies as workforce shortages to be a cornerstone of the workforce development plan. However, the current inverted labor market, with over 30,000 more vacancies than there are unemployed people looking for work, means that we can't afford to look solely at the long-term. Shortages in healthcare, behavioral health, and first responders are current, urgent, and not going to improve without dedicated cross-agency efforts.

The sense of urgency underlying this goal is compounded by the unprecedented investments in infrastructure that are underway and in the pipeline. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act, and Inflation Reduction Act are all driving urgent needs in industries related to construction, broadband expansion, natural resource management, and water infrastructure.

Governor Lujan Grisham's goal to make New Mexico the best state in which to raise a child unifies all of the industries within this goal. The simple objective is to create a workforce that enables us to take care of the people and places we love.

Goal 2: Build and empower the workforce to thrive in the face of changes to the state and national economy and the way we work.

This goal began as a way to articulate the difference between industries with jobs right now (like construction) and industries that have strong future growth potential (like bioscience). Throughout the course of our regional labs and public input forums, the goal expanded to reflect all the changes we are likely to see in the economy and workplaces of the future.

The Future of Work Institute estimates that 65% of children entering primary school today will end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist. Globally, one billion people are estimated to need reskilling by 2030 because of technology's impacts on work. Over the next two years, 48% of the total global workforce will work in a mobile or hybrid arrangement. After hearing these figures, our stakeholders highlighted the need to develop uniquely human foundational skills and the absolute necessity of digital literacy.

Technology is not the only rapid change that New Mexico faces. In 2022, New Mexico was the nation's second-largest crude oil-producing state, after Texas. The state accounted for more than 13% of total U.S. crude oil production. We were also the 7th largest natural gas-producing states and accounted for 6% of the nation's total natural gas gross withdrawals. The decline in supply of fossil fuels and intentional steps to develop more sustainable sources of energy will have a profound impact on our state and our workforce. For these reasons, energy transition workforce issues are part of this goal.

Climate change is another force driving this goal. We saw the largest wildfires in New Mexico history in 2022, while 2023 brought drought and record-high temperatures. Developing equitable strategies for a climate resilient workforce is a key part of the State's Climate Action Plan, and NMDWS leads the Climate Action Team for economic transition, with these action items also falling within Goal 2.

We are also embracing industries that have tremendous growth potential over the next four years. Aerospace, bioscience, advanced manufacturing, and sustainable agriculture all fall into this category. These sectors align with the State's economic development strategy. They also offer a longer-term opportunity to develop a pipeline, in contrast with the industries that fall within Goal 1.

Goal 3: Increase year-over-year labor force participation rates and economic prosperity for disengaged and difficult to reach New Mexicans.

New Mexico has now, and has historically had, one of the lowest labor force participation rates (LFPR) in the nation. Diving below the surface of this statistic led to Goal 3, focused on getting New Mexicans "off the bench" and into jobs and careers.

The steepest difference between the New Mexico population's LFPR and the that of the United States is in men ages 20-24, where our rate is 12.1% lower than that of the nation as a whole. Between 2019 and 2022, men's LFPR in New Mexico decreased in every age group except 55 to 64. Underlying those data are many factors, including disengagement, poor educational attainment, criminal justice involvement, and a lack of rural opportunity.

Women are not in much better shape, also seeing decreases from 2019 to 2022 in every age group except 55 to 64. New Mexico women's LFPR is 6.5% below the national rate in the 25-34 age group, and 6.2% below the national rate in the 45-54 age group. In addition to the dynamics in the male population, women carry a much larger share of the caregiving burden for children and elders.

Although our LFPR for people with a disability is higher than that of the US (49% compared to 46.3%), our overall population of people with a disability is very high (17.1%). This means that our LFPR is bound to be lower because of people who cannot work because of their disabilities.

But it also means that reaching those people with disabilities who can work is all the more important, and that the demand for vocational rehabilitation services is quite high.

Similarly, while New Mexico has a slightly higher than US percentage of people who are in the labor market and earn less than poverty level (38% vs. 37.1%), we have a dramatically higher poverty rate than US as a whole (18.2% vs. 11.5%). Again, the effect is that these lower participation rates have a greater impact on our overall LFPR.

The significance for the workforce system is that we absolutely must work with folks who are more difficult to reach and face greater barriers. Our economy needs these individuals, and the workforce system needs to communicate to these individuals how important they are to the success of our state.

A multitude of programs already exist for many of these groups, but awareness of the programs is dismal. Also as part of this goal, we need to make the job-seeker experience more streamlined and friendly. We also need to educate employers to dismantle bias against people with disabilities, people who are reintegrating into society, and working caregivers.

Goal 4: Attract out-of-state workers to New Mexico and improve retention of New Mexicans within the State, particularly in rural communities.

Between 2010 and 2022, New Mexico had a net negative migration to the tune of -30,085 individuals. Since 2010, nearly 20,000 more workers left New Mexico than arrived. Within the state, we have seen a similar dynamic as the rural areas lose population to the urban centers. Not only did we lose these individuals, but as they aged and raised families in other states, we lost a new generation of workers.

Goal 4 was not one of the original goals that we had at the beginning of the stakeholder engagement process. Instead, it emerged from our stakeholders as they saw these numbers that match their lived experience. Stakeholders recognized that we may never have an adequate workforce, especially in light of the factors driving the other three goals, unless we work to bring people (back) to New Mexico.

Attracting out-of-state talent and “boomerangs” has been a goal of economic development strategies from time to time over the past two decades. Targeted recruitment has also been a strategy for various industries like tech and police officers. However, this has never been a goal that we shared in the workforce system. With new initiatives to draw people to our state, from tuition-free college to outdoor recreation, our stakeholders felt it was time for the workforce system to join forces to this end.

3. Performance Goals

Appendix 1 includes 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. Because of the timing of submissions, these performance goals are subject to negotiation with federal oversight agencies.

4. Assessment

The State will continue to assess all the combined partners in the plan and the overall effectiveness of the workforce investment system in New Mexico in relation to the strategic vision and goals and use results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements. The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB), which is appointed by the Governor to provide vision and direction for the workforce system, is required to develop and improve the statewide WIOA-funded activities and the one-stop delivery system, including development of linkages to ensure coordination and prevent duplication among the programs and activities. The Board fulfills this function by providing direction for the development of the WIOA Strategic Plan and developing comprehensive state performance measures to assess the effectiveness of all the combined partners in the plan's workforce investment activities.

To assist the board in fulfilling its duties, the SWDB formed committees to provide oversight and direction in the following areas:

- To promote and support business engagement.
- To coordinate program data to evaluate the return on investment of workforce programs and services.
- To design systems and programs that coordinate and leverage WIOA resources.
- To coordinate state agency efforts to support comprehensive, customer-driven one-stop centers.
- To monitor program effectiveness and fiscal accountability
- To guide program evaluations as required by 20 CFR 682.220.

The Board also reviews, evaluates, and reports annually on the performance of all workforce development activities administered by the combined partners in the plan, including the state agencies involved with workforce development. Key areas of focus include developing linkages with the public education and higher education agencies to ensure coordination of vocational education, apprenticeship, adult education and literacy, employment training programs and vocational rehabilitation programs with other workforce development and training programs. Any problems identified by the State Board will be included in the annual report on strategic plan implementation and the measures that will be taken to address those problems.

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).

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)

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)

This section of the Combined State Plan includes the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided above. This section integrates the responses to each subsection of Section (2)(c) of the *Required Elements for Submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Plan Modifications under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. The responses are organized by the goals set forth above, rather than separated by subsection, partner, or program.

1. ***Cross-Goal Strategies***

As our planning process began to develop strategies, it became clear that certain strategies would cut across some or all of our four goals. The following "cross-goal strategies" are relevant to achieving multiple goals:

Cross-Goal Strategy 1: Collaborate across WIOA partners, workforce regions, education providers, and employers to develop comprehensive strategies for priority sectors that are tailored to each workforce region and detail actionable plans for outreach and recruitment.

Sector strategies have long been discussed in the WIOA State Plan. In practical terms, concrete sector strategies have been elusive. Stakeholders identified the root causes of this dynamic as a lack of shared vision on what a sector strategy is and a lack of true ownership of the sector strategy process. Our activities within this strategy are designed to fix these problems.

- Develop template for sector outreach. We do not need each Title, program and local board to invent its own approach to sector outreach. Working collaboratively and through rapid experimentation, NMDWS will lead the process of developing a shared vision and process for preparing a sector strategy, working with all core and combined partner programs.
- Train WIOA partner staff to conduct meaningful sector outreach. In many of the trainings we attended on sector strategies, stakeholders saw a heavy reliance on contractors and outside expertise. In contrast, our partners want to build internal capacity to create and maintain sector strategies. Our emphasis will be on pulling in outside expertise to train our workforce system staff to be their own sector strategy experts. This will increase investment in the sector strategy process and foster ownership of the final product.
- Working with employers and using proven sector outreach techniques, develop specific, achievable, measurable, and time-bound goals for each sector. Another historical weakness in our sector efforts have been a reliance on general principles (like "build a pipeline of electricians") rather than specific measures (like, "enroll double the number

of electrician apprentices in the state on an annual basis, starting in 2024"). Successful sector strategies will culminate in SMART goals.

- Develop sector strategy roadmaps that outline activities, timelines, and owners from each core and combined partner program. SMART goals need people and resources. The sector strategy roadmaps will include realistic activities and timelines that the State Workforce Development Board can use to drive accountability across the workforce system.
- Within each sector, identify specific connections between that industry and difficult to engage and historically underserved populations, using tools that include apprenticeship. In order to achieve Goal 3, we must engage difficult-to-reach residents as we engage in sector strategies. As we articulate career pathways, we need to recognize that people will be starting their journeys in different areas. Sector strategies must draw on vocational rehabilitation and adult education resources to ensure that all New Mexicans benefit.
- Ensure that all workforce programs are integrated into sector strategies as appropriate. This will fortify the efforts to keep equity at the forefront of all sector strategies.
- Identify and implement strategies to market New Mexico jobs and careers in in-demand and emerging sectors to out-of-state audiences. In order to achieve Goal 4, sector strategies must identify opportunities to recruit people to New Mexico. This can be as simple as identifying jobs in each sector that are strong candidates for out-of-state recruitment. This will include specific strategies for populations like TANF recipients and other low-income populations with barriers.
- Work with all core and combined partners to develop a shared definition for terms like internships, work-based learning, and pre-apprenticeship. Currently the Public Education Department is leading this process.
- Convene quarterly sector check-in meetings to review progress. Sector strategies must remain living documents, with continued progress and accountability. For those strategies being undertaken at the local level, communication is also key to efficiency and making sure our local initiatives are not at odds with one another. Quarterly meetings will keep everyone on track and in sync.

Cross-Goal Strategy 2: Coordinate with education and training providers and employers in priority sectors to create flexible pathways, certification programs, short-term credentialing, and work-based learning opportunities to prepare the workforce.

Between siloed funding and mismatched eligibility and program requirements, we often struggle to stay in step with our partners in education and training. Our stakeholders emphasized that greater coordination in this area is absolutely essential to achieving all of our goals.

- Grow the number of programs certified on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and the number of registered apprenticeship programs to support both in-demand and emerging industries. The ETPL has grown stagnant and is not clearly tied to career

pathways in priority sectors. We need to communicate the value of being on the ETPL and fill any gaps that we identify through the lens of our sector strategies.

- Improve the quality of data from ETPL providers, including those reporting through the Higher Education Department and those reporting directly to DWS, through technical assistance and quality control initiatives. ETPL data can paint a powerful picture of the impact of our work and the places we can improve. This strategy includes working closely with providers to improve the quality and timeliness of ETPL data.
- Identify and encourage / fund programs that have additional supports for difficult to engage and historically underserved populations across all core and combined programs. Our education and training partners have many programs to connect and support the underserved populations that are key to the success of Goal 3. We need to connect the dots between our services and theirs to create a strong safety net. This will include specific strategies for populations like TANF recipients and other low-income populations with barriers.
- Support and coordinate the marketing of sector-specific New Mexico apprenticeships, educational, and training programs to out-of-state audiences. New Mexico has cutting edge programs in niche priority areas like broadband expansion. Part of this strategy is collaborating to spread the word about these programs to our rural areas and out of state, so that we can achieve Goal 4 by drawing people to New Mexico education and training venues.

Cross-Goal Strategy 3: Work with the NM Public Education Department (PED), WIOA partners, and employers to increase outreach in middle and high schools and help students explore available career paths in priority sectors by streamlining and clearly defining the path among work-based learning programs.

New Mexico has done a great job of investing in programs to connect youth to work. Unfortunately those programs are not connected to each other or our sector strategies. This strategy aims to address this challenge.

- The first step in this strategy is coming to a shared definition of terms like “work-based learning,” “internship,” “pre-apprenticeship” and related terms. We also need a comprehensive statewide budget that quantifies our investment in these programs.
- Through the planning process, core and combined programs and other stakeholders identified many programs that can be matched to priority sectors and underserved populations, including:
 - Summer Enrichment Internship Program
 - New Mexico Career Pathways
 - Careers2Communities
 - High School Career Counselors
 - New Mexico Job Corps
 - Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

- Workforce Pathways for Youth
- WIOA Youth Program
- NM Internship Plus
- New Mexico Graduation Reality and Dual-role Skills (NM GRADS)
- TANF E&T and programs for other low-income populations with barriers
- Registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs

All partners with work-based learning programs must track the demographics and outcomes of participants. NMDWS is also working on developing educational outcomes for these programs. Agency leadership and the State Workforce Development Board will monitor these data regularly to identify opportunities for expansion or refocusing programs as needed.

Cross-Goal Strategy 4: Enhance outreach efforts around incentives and programs available to employers in priority sectors that support them with finding and retaining qualified talent.

A recurring theme in the planning process is that we have programs to meet a wide variety of populations where they are and engage them in training and work. Unfortunately, much like work-based learning programs, these programs are largely unknown, often underutilized, and disconnected from each other and from the business community.

- Develop and promote shared communication tools to increase the reach of workforce programs, including but not limited to the following programs offered by core and combined programs and other stakeholders. This will include specific strategies for populations like TANF recipients and other low-income populations with barriers.
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
 - Job Training Incentive Programs (JTIP)
 - Step Up
 - Federal Bonding
 - Veteran Tax Exemption and Disabled Veteran Tax Exemption
 - On-the-job Training
 - Custom Training Programs
 - Additional NMDWS Business Services
 - Student Loan Repayment Programs
 - Registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs

1. ***Goal 1 Strategies***

Goal 1 is to collaborate with employers to expand the workforce that supports the safety, health, and well-being of New Mexican families and the modernization of New Mexico's infrastructure. The following outlines strategies specific to meeting the needs of sectors that need immediate help with recruitment and retention: healthcare, first responders, early childhood care and

education, vertical and horizontal construction, broadband expansion, and water infrastructure and natural resource management.

These following sector-specific strategies will be included and developed in the detailed sector strategies to be developed per Cross-Goal Strategy 1. These specific strategies are largely the outcome of matching exercises that stakeholders undertook in the regional planning labs, connecting workforce programs to specific industries.

Healthcare, including Behavioral Healthcare

Strategy 1: Connect participants to programs that create a pathway for people with lived experience to enter the behavioral health and healthcare professions, fostering a more compassionate and understanding healthcare environment while expanding career opportunities for those with valuable lived experiences.

Strategy 2: Support the implementation of recommendations from the New Mexico Health Care Workforce Committee 2022 Annual Report.

Strategy 3: Partner with New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD) Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) to improve access to mental health/well-being services for the first responders to improve retention.

Strategy 4: Build on interest in the Be Pro Be Proud program's healthcare modules to increase middle and high school students' awareness about the diverse career opportunities available in healthcare.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Strategy 1: Develop and expand pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for early childhood education to provide aspiring educators with essential practical training, mentorship, and direct classroom engagement.

Strategy 2: Convene employers, including employers with successful childcare programs (SFCC, UNM), and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to hear about challenges to establishing employer-based childcare services and identify actionable solutions to address challenges.

Strategy 3: Coordinate with ECECD to assist employers with developing childcare options for their employees. This may include tying ECECD and state tax incentives to on-the-job training or career pathways in the workforce system.

First Responders

Strategy 1: Expand partnerships with paramedic licensure, law enforcement, and dispatch training programs to develop pre-apprenticeship programs for first responders and a standardized approach to funding uniforms and equipment.

Strategy 2: Participate in statewide women in law enforcement initiative to promote and support the recruitment, advancement, and retention of women in law enforcement.

Strategy 3: Partner with New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD) Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) to improve access to mental health/well-being services for the first responders to improve retention.

Vertical and Horizontal Construction

Strategy 1: Build from the Be Pro Be Proud program to increase middle and high school students' awareness about the diverse career opportunities available in vertical and horizontal construction, broadband expansion, and manufacturing.

Strategy 2: Expand building trades and other infrastructure-related pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships through diversified funding and increased outreach.

Strategy 3: Partner with tribal communities on conducting basic skills training that will enable communities to spend infrastructure money in a timely way.

Broadband Expansion

Strategy 1: Collaborate with the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion and Be Pro Be Proud to develop targeted outreach, education, and training programs to grow the workforce and bridge the digital divide in underserved communities.

Strategy 2: Coordinate the sector strategy for broadband expansion at the state (rather than local) level to ensure coordination with state and tribal infrastructure funding.

Water Infrastructure and Natural Resource Management

Strategy 1: Collaborate on the execution of NM Environment Department's strategic plan for environmental reclamation, including assistance with establishing lower-threshold training requirements.

Strategy 2: Build on the work of the 2022 Green and Renewable Energy Sector Convening. NMDWS, in partnership with the Economic Development Department and New Mexico Center for Economic Opportunity, held a sector convening in October 2022 for green and renewable energy, attended by industry, research institutions, and government representatives. The session focused on examining the opportunities, challenges, strategies and the metrics for success for the renewable energy industry in New Mexico. Each session included a short overview, sharing of perspectives, and information including follow-up break out discussions on key takeaways. Workforce-related recommendations included "insourcing" green and renewable energy jobs to New Mexico residents instead of out-of-state workers through investments in apprenticeships and training and aggressively pursuing federal funding opportunities under current and future programs, such as within FERC or through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

2. Goal 2 Strategies

Goal 2 is to build and empower the workforce to thrive in the face of changes to the state and national economy and the way we work. The following outlines strategies specific to preparing the workforce for future changes in the national and state economy. The key areas within Goal 2 are energy transition, climate resilience, and changes in technology and the workplace.

The sector-specific strategies below will be included and developed in the detailed sector strategies to be developed per Cross-Goal Strategy 1.

Strategy 1: Explore models and innovations to address wage differentials and mass layoffs in the transition from traditional fossil fuels to other forms of energy.

The Energy Transition Act (ETA) establishes New Mexico as a national leader in clean energy. The ETA sets a statewide renewable energy standard of 50 percent by 2030 for New Mexico investor-owned utilities and rural electric cooperatives and a goal of 80 percent by 2040, in addition to setting zero-carbon resources standards for investor-owned utilities by 2045 and rural electric cooperatives by 2050. The law transitions New Mexico away from coal and toward clean energy, ensuring greater renewable energy production and reducing costs for consumers. It also provided tens of millions of dollars of economic and workforce support for communities impacted by coal plant closures, as well as the development of renewable replacement power in San Juan County. NMDWS has created a number of innovative programs using ETA resources, including a Direct Payment Program, Wage Differential Program, Direct Training Program and Apprenticeship Program. This strategy will involve monitoring and drawing on data from these programs and similar efforts in other states to develop a toolkit for the energy transition.

Strategy 2: Spearhead a foundational skills initiative that empowers job seekers to develop uniquely human skills (e.g., resiliency, adaptability, critical thinking, empathy, emotional intelligence) that are needed regardless of the sector within which they will work, fostering personal growth and preparing them to thrive in an ever-evolving job market.

Through the course of our planning process, we heard from employers that they don't know how technology will change, but they know what will not change. We need people to hear, understand, respect and express compassion for other people – that is something all the artificial intelligence in the world will never do as well as we do. In a world of limitless information, we need people to be able to think critically about that information, its source, its aims, and its validity. We need people to respond to the changing world more quickly than technology will – for example, putting a team on a bus to a community experiencing a natural disaster will always be more effective than polling, bots or apps. We need people to prioritize and manage their time, because even as technology helps us do things faster, it won't lead us to our goals faster without the right priorities and management.

These skills have many names: durable, foundational, timeless, human. Ironically, they are exactly the skills that have been stripped from the K-12 education system in the years when standardized tests were king. While the education world grapples with reintroducing those skills as part of basic education, the workforce world must confront the challenges of a generation that never got those essentials. These foundational skills must be part of work and career readiness, whether the person coming through our door is 16 or 60.

The activities that are part of this strategy include:

- Developing a portfolio of foundational skill sets and identify training providers including platforms like LinkedIn Learning. NMDWS is working with New Mexico State University to explore micro-credentialing for areas from management training to digital literacy to people skills. We will focus on asking every employer we work with what skills they most need today and will continue to need tomorrow, and then actively integrate and use that information to rapidly develop responsive training and experiential learning.
- Expanding use of workforce preparation and pre-vocational paths to expand training on foundational skills, in partnership with Adult Education. The Adult Education IET model is a strong way to synchronize the paths of foundational skills development and more

specific job-training. As trainings and credentials are developed, we will use the tools we currently use for literacy and numeracy for foundational skills as well.

- Training WIOA staff to be trainers and educators on foundational skills as part of career counseling. Our staff faces the same challenges around foundational skills that our jobseekers face, and the added challenge of needing to stay abreast of developments in this area. We will develop mechanisms to communicate and educate our staff on foundational skills consistently and frequently, in order to create a community of practice.

Strategy 3: Connect the rural, low-income, and vulnerable populations that work in the fossil fuel industries with the training and work opportunities needed to engage in next-generation industries. The activities that will be part of this strategy include:

- Working together with community colleges and organizations to develop and deliver custom training, focused on the giving underserved populations the skills necessary to enter a career in emerging industries, including literacy, numeracy, test-taking and computer skills.
- Partnering with unions and other registered apprenticeship program sponsors to develop new programs specific to emerging industries.
- Extending the existing pre-apprenticeship and high school career counselor programs, by connecting students enrolled in CTE programs with opportunities related to emerging industries.
- Collaborating with the NM Environment Department, NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, unions, and private industry to find good jobs across the state in the field of climate resilience.

Strategy 4: *Assuming work is funded:* Partner with the Arrowhead Center at NMSU on the Energy Tech Hub initiative aimed at transforming NM into a global leader in advanced energy technologies, resulting in bolstered – and sustained – prosperity for the state.

While the fate of Tech Hub grants is uncertain, there is strong momentum to find resources to accomplish these programs, one way or another. Workforce agencies will continue to be key partners.

Strategy 5: Partner across the workforce system and with NewSpace Nexus and Pathways to the Stars to build the aerospace workforce of the future.

The aerospace industry in New Mexico has come together to develop innovative approaches to workforce development that span kindergarten through career. Rather than reinventing an aerospace sector strategy, NMDWS and local boards will partner with NewSpace Nexus in its Pathway to the Stars and other initiatives. Our focus will be on those activities for ages 16 and up.

Strategy 6: Explore options for expanding Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) and diversify funding sources to support agriculture businesses with gaining the funding needed to attract and educate a skilled workforce.

In order to meet our goals related to sustainable agriculture, we must broaden the scope of existing programs or create parallel programs to serve the workforce needs of the agriculture sector. This may include statutory changes to programs like JTIP or better marketing of programs that already include the ag sector.

3. Goal 3 Strategies

Goal 3 is to increase year-over-year labor force participation rates and economic prosperity for disengaged and difficult to reach New Mexicans. The following strategies aim to develop pathways to prosperity for disengaged and difficult to reach New Mexicans:

Strategy 1: Streamline and improve delivery of wrap-around services to at-risk youth, criminal justice-involved individuals, Native American communities, people with disabilities, rural New Mexicans, English-language learners, veterans, women who have left the workforce, and individuals receiving unemployment assistance.

We know that people who have historically been challenged to find a place in the workforce need additional support to be successful. The behavioral health world calls these wrap-around services, and the workforce system is adopting this terminology. Aligned case management (discussed in more detail in alignment strategies) will be key to this strategy. Removing barriers to access to wrap-around services is also within this strategy.

One promising development is the partnership between TANF and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). Now, TANF participants go through the process of signing up for ECECD resources at the same time that they enroll in E&T services. This can serve as a model for co-enrollment between other programs.

Strategy 2: Advocate for WIOA stipends to not be treated as income for tax and benefit calculation purposes. Stakeholders in our public input and regional lab sessions identified this specific strategy, related to the “cliff effect” that deters benefit recipients from working.

Strategy 3: Expand opportunities for English language learners, particularly in the border regions, including custom curriculum to support them in pursuing meaningful careers regardless of language barriers. Through partnerships between Adult Education and other WIOA programs, this is a practical, low-risk/high-reward strategy to engaged the ELL population.

Strategy 4: Develop a tool to educate make it easier for residents to find available assistance opportunities and applicable eligibility requirements so that they can more easily access programs and services applicable to them. ECECD has an excellent childcare finder that can serve as the model for this type of platform.

Strategy 5: Educate employers on expanding their conventional recruiting pools to include marginalized groups through skills-based and other inclusive employment practices.

Strategy 6: Innovate and increase marketing and outreach efforts to marginalized populations to bridge the information gap and ensure that vital services reach those who need them the most.

Data reviews show that initial assessments and triage must help job seekers meet critical needs – food, utility assistance, shelter, safety, etc.— before job search assistance is provided.

Strategy 7: Enter into intergovernmental agreements with tribal and pueblo workforce programs that provide for communication of opportunities, opportunities for collaboration and co-enrollment, and joint discussions of sector strategies and other initiatives. This will ensure the continuation of these relationships through changes in state and tribal leadership.

4. Goal 4 Strategies

Goal 4 is to attract out-of-state workers to New Mexico and improve retention of New Mexicans within the State, particularly in rural communities. The following strategies will help attract out-of-state workers to New Mexico and retain New Mexicans within the State:

Strategy 1: Participate in statewide campaigns to promote New Mexico as a great place to live and work, for resident, non-resident, and “boomerang” populations. The State is evaluating a campaign, similar to the “New Mexico True” tourism campaign, to tell the story of why this is a great place to live. The workforce system’s labor market information can help to target and tailor these larger efforts.

Strategy 2: Advertise “hot jobs” outside of the state, paired with materials on why living in New Mexico is appealing (climate, inclusivity, Opportunity Scholarship). WIOA programs have historically never marketed outside of state borders. Yet nearly one quarter of our field offices (Clovis, Farmington, Gallup, Hobbs, Raton, Sunland Park) are within 20 miles of the state’s border. Given the inverted labor market, advertising New Mexico employment opportunities in neighboring states will be a good investment.

Strategy 3: Partner with the State’s chambers of commerce and Department of Economic Development on out-of-state recruitment initiatives. Workforce agencies have often been an afterthought in drawing businesses to locate in our state. As employers are increasingly concerned about finding skilled talent, this is beginning to change. By building strong relationships with the key players in business recruitment, WIOA partners will be at the table earlier in the conversation.

Strategy 4: Explore options for working with businesses to promote TN visas. The nonimmigrant NAFTA Professional (TN) visa allows citizens of Canada and Mexico, as NAFTA professionals, to work in the United States in prearranged business activities for U.S. or foreign employers. Yet New Mexico ranked 22nd among the states in TN visa issuance in 2020. This would be another tool for businesses who are struggling to find skilled workers.

Strategy 6: Partner with Boomerang NM to attract New Mexico natives to return home. Boomerang NM aims “to help STEM professionals make connections to discover career opportunities in every sector of New Mexico's economy.” Although some WIOA core and combined partners have worked with this group from time-to-time, stakeholders suggested exploring a longer term and more formal relationship.

Strategy 7: Collaborate on remote worker recruitment strategies, specifically addressing skills gaps in work-from-home (similar to Clovis Remote) and pair that with employment services that link to remote work jobs out-of-state, with a focus of keeping people in rural communities.

Alignment Strategies

To align all programs and services within the State's workforce system, we will pursue the following strategies:

Alignment Strategy 1: Improve communication and collaboration among core and Combined State Plan program partners.

Communication was the foremost concern and weakness identified through the planning process. Partners recognized that everyone has a desire to communicate, but coordination efforts fall by the wayside as each agency moves forward with its own activities. The following activities were identified as key to improving communication:

- Develop and implement common communication and messaging and branding.
- Develop a schedule of regular meetings, which may include quarterly meetings with local regions, DWS, and State Board Chair; monthly one-on-one meetings between local regions and DWS; and regular meetings at the local level with all partners.
- Collaborate and coordinate among all partners on grant writing.

Alignment Strategy 2: Strengthen the Statewide Workforce Development Board (SWDB) by improving committee structure and outlining specific goals and tasks for committees and board members.

The SWDB has struggled to find its role within the workforce system, especially as meetings went remote during the pandemic. In-person meetings returned in spring 2023. The process of filling vacancies has been streamlined. In September 2023, the Board revised its bylaws to solidify the committee structure. Board members participated enthusiastically in the planning process, attending events in each of the regions as well as the core and combined partner sessions. The SWDB is energized to play a key role in WIOA State Plan implementation.

Activities identified under this strategy are:

- Implement updated SWDB bylaws and committee structure.
- Engage in a planning process that results in specific goals and tasks for SWDB committees and members.
- Structure quarterly board meetings to drive towards accountability for and celebration of goals and tasks.
- Increase engagement with local boards on specific initiatives and determine what local boards and partners should share with the state board.

Alignment Strategy 3: Improve services to the employer community by streamlining processes, increasing coordination, and defining clear pathways for business engagement.

Another key theme in the planning process was the need to engage with businesses in cross-agency teams to simplify working with our programs. During one of the regional planning sessions, a business owner suggested that employers would also benefit from the equivalent of case management. By integrating our business outreach services, WIOA partners can make it more simple to access our multitude of programs. Rather than engaging with businesses on separate programs, a business engagement meeting should start with an inquiry into the business's needs and challenges. Partners should then collaborate to create a package of

services for those specific needs. Ideally, the business never needs to know what agency they are working with – only that the workforce system was able to help them with minimal effort on their part. Activities identified under this strategy are:

- (Re)build business teams across state agencies that engage all partners (including DVR and TANF business specialists) to establish a business “case management” approach that leads with each business’ needs and presents services in a source-blind manner.
- Develop consistent and comprehensive employer outreach materials.
- Improve systems for tracking business engagement – including evaluation and possible replication of local systems currently being used or in development.
- Develop and implement business outreach “roadshow” to explain all workforce services across the state.
- Support Adult Education programs to cultivate employer relationships for career pathway, workforce preparation, and Integrated Education and Training initiatives, as well as access to work experience for adult education students.

Alignment Strategy 4: Implement an aligned case management system across people, process, and technology to streamline and improve delivery of services.

Aligned case management is not merely a technology solution; it entails coordinating people, processes and data to provide seamless service to jobseekers and employers. In Fall 2023, New Mexico joined the Aligned Case Management Institute, an initiative facilitated by the USDOL ETA’s Office of Workforce Investment and NASWA’s Workforce Information Technology Support Center (WITSC). The mission of the ACM Institute is “to enhance service delivery and customer experience within the public workforce system through the creation of a replicable framework and an on-demand toolkit of resources, leveraging interoperable data and modern technology.” Activities in this planning period will benefit from this opportunity to collaborate, prototype potential solutions, and design a state-specific action plan. These activities are:

- Develop interagency MOUs to delineate exactly what programs and services will be aligned.
- Complete development of specifications and procure services for development of an aligned case management system.
- Develop policies and procedures for alignment of case management, referrals, common registration, and any new technologies.
- Evaluate, refine, and strengthen WIOA I application processes to support adult education students’ priority access (as basic skills deficient individuals) to Title I services

Alignment Strategy 5: Innovate and collaborate to contain costs of field offices.

While other states decrease their field presence, New Mexico’s workforce system recognizes that in-person services are necessary. Face-to-face services are our competitive advantage over online job search and recruitment tools like Indeed and LinkedIn. Our field offices remove barriers like broadband and language access. While core partners are pursuing funds to make

field offices more inviting, we also recognize that we must contain costs in order to continue to provide services in the remote parts of the state. Activities under this strategy are:

- Conduct ongoing reviews of office locations/staffing patterns with specific attention to promoting co-location, strengthened referral practices, and coordinated outreach.
- Explore alternative locations such as libraries or other free locations.
- Participate in statewide pilot program to establish Family Resource Centers.

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).

The State Workforce Development Board plays a leadership role in aligning federal investments in job training and education programs, integrating service delivery across programs, enhancing the capacity and performance of the workforce development system at both the state and local levels, ensuring the one-stop system is customer driven, and the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. As such, the State Workforce Development Board establishes overarching strategies and framework for the local boards to follow in developing local plans that are consistent with the State Plan; establishes accountability measures and expectations for the implementation of the local board plans; conducts annual (or more frequent) review of local boards plans and progress; ensures compliance with criteria for membership on a local boards; receives and communicates public comments regarding the activities of the local boards to ensure accountability and transparency; recommends action consistent with state rule and policy if local board outcomes are not achieved and are not consistent with the principles, strategies, and vision described in this State Plan.

The State Board has established committees that include the following:

- Data and Performance Committee - This committee will spearhead the acquisition and coordination of data across agencies to develop state performance measures to evaluate the overall effectiveness and return on investment of workforce/training programs and services. While recognizing the need for appropriate privacy safeguards, this committee will work to establish the necessary data sharing agreements to enable an integrated tracking process to better assess how well the state's investment in individuals receiving career services yield successful outcomes. These efforts will provide a basis for setting priorities, goals, and benchmarks across agencies based on solid data.

- Policy Review Committee - The State Board will ensure the workforce system is agile and responsive to the needs of its customers, while complying with applicable laws and rules. This committee will review existing policies at the state level and make recommendations for aligning those policies with the State Plan.
- Business Engagement Committee - This committee will support the development and execution of statewide Sector Strategy deployment, with a focus on employer engagement to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, gaps and employability of the New Mexico workforce.
- Workforce/Education Coordination Committee - This committee will work to engage and challenge stakeholders to design systems and programs that coordinate and leverage WIOA resources; improve consistent and standardized assessment of basic skills; and increase the attainment of relevant credentials validated by employers. This committee could promote a strong partnership between community colleges and the public workforce system and explore options to more effectively target resources to support and sustain successful projects and demonstrated effectiveness.

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.

The activities that the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies include:

NM Department of Workforce Solutions and Local Workforce Development Boards:

- WIOA Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs
- High School Career Counselors
- Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
- Be Pro Be Proud
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Step Up (with Children, Youth & Families Department)
- Federal Bonding
- Veteran Tax Exemption and Disabled Veteran Tax Exemption
- On-the-job Training

- Custom Training Programs

NM Higher Education Department:

- Targeted educational services outlined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II
- Network of 26 local program providers in every workforce region of the state which offer free instruction and training to eligible adults, with an emphasis on career pathways that lead to jobs with family-sustaining wages in high-priority sectors and opportunities for advancement, targeted student loan repayment programs
- 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
- Corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals
- 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.

For a complete definition and description of each Title II fundable activity, see Program-Specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs. In accordance with the terms of their AEFLA sub-grants, local Adult Education providers are restricted to program activities that fall within the aforementioned scope. In providing these activities, local Adult Education program providers collaborate directly with local one-stops and workforce development boards; with local nonprofit organizations; and with the local business community.

In addition to the activities provided by the local programs, the Adult Education Division of NMHED utilizes AEFLA and other available funds to support local program oversight and leadership activities in a manner both required and supported by WIOA Title II legislation. This includes local program monitoring, systematically providing high-quality professional development opportunities, and aligning Adult Education and Literacy Activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement the strategies identified in the State Plan. Adult Education is committed to supporting access to career pathways for individuals served by AEFLA funds.

NM Public Education Department:

- Summer Enrichment Internship Program; New Mexico Career Pathways; Careers2Communities, NM Internship Plus, New Mexico Graduation Reality and Dual-role Skills (NM GRADS)

NM Economic Development Department: Job Training Incentive Programs (JTIP)

Other programs: New Mexico Job Corps, Workforce Pathways for Youth

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.

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. For example, family literacy planning activities described in (A) will be aligned with Title I Youth and Adult services as appropriate. The combined and core partners will also be aligning their various training plan requirements to ensure that participants do not need to duplicate efforts or approach multiple programs in order to get the benefit of every program they are eligible for.

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.

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.

Employment Services are provided as part of the one-stop delivery system. Currently, each local workforce development area has at least one comprehensive workforce development center that includes, at a minimum, three partners: WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, Wagner- Peyser Employment Services, and access to Unemployment Insurance services. Each Employment Services field office is assigned a Wagner -Peyser Area Manager who ensures the workforce centers are universally accessible, customer centered, and training is job-driven with an emphasis in career pathways. This includes providing easy access to and assistance with workforce related activities: such as assisting employers in recruiting talent, exploring work

preparation and career development services for job seekers, as well as making a seamless referral to WIOA employment for on-the-job-training, and occupational training programs. Employment Services staff follow required guidelines regarding referral and placement. All of the Basic Career Services offered by the WIOA programs must be made available by Wagner-Peyser staff in coordination with other one-stop delivery system partners. Employment Services staff may also make available the Individualized Career Services, particularly for those individuals with barriers. Wagner-Peyser services are free of charge for individuals. Employment Services staff work cooperatively and collaboratively with the Local Workforce Development Boards, site managers and operators, and other workforce partners, to effectively serve both employers and jobseekers. A key role of this program is to identify potential matches between employers and jobseekers. The program's service delivery approach includes self-service, facilitated self-help, and staff-assisted services, and involves a number of other tools and resources as follows.

Both VR agencies have policies that support implementation of the State's strategies. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NMDVR and the Commission has existed for many years to coordinate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to persons who are deaf-blind. The MOU was revised in 2020 to update provisions for the coordination of services, processing of referrals, transitioning of cases, handling of joint cases, sharing of office space, sharing of confidential information, and representation on the State Workforce Board.

NMHED-AE's alignment efforts involve supporting collaboration and formal partnerships between local Adult Education providers and core WIOA partners and One Stops. NMHED actively encourages and incentivizes these collaborations. This commitment to supporting partnerships is reflected in the competitive AEFLA grant process itself, specifically in the RFA requirements and considerations. It is equally reflected in provider reporting requirements and strategic professional development initiatives. All local program providers are encouraged to attend and actively participate in local workforce board meetings; all four workforce regions currently have an Adult Education representative on their local board, while the Adult Education State Director serves on the State Workforce Development Board. Every local Adult Education program provider has entered into an MOU with their regional board(s) and One Stop(s). This MOU at minimum covers elements such as the nature of the partnership, referral and co-enrollment processes, and processes for negotiation of MOUs. While MOUs are signed by every Adult Education program provider in a workforce region, NMHED-AE designates one provider in each region to hold the roles and responsibilities of the cost-sharing agreement, or IFA. NMHED-AE is actively working to promote the use of MOU addenda in each region between Adult Education providers and the local Workforce Development Board and One Stop, further specifying the unique needs, collaborations, and agreements between these core partners.

Referrals and co-enrollment between core partners are handled differently in each region. They are largely facilitated individually by local Adult Education providers and One Stop partner staff, since at present New Mexico has neither a statewide standardized referral system nor one shared data system to support it. To support referral to Adult Education by partners, NMHED-AE invests in an online student registration portal that is designed for adults with emerging literacy. This portal may be accessed from any location via a link: <https://studentportal.literacypro.com/nm/home>. When a prospective student fills out the requested information on the portal, the student is automatically pre-ingested into the Adult Education data management system, LACES, and receives contact information for programs that

meet their stated needs. At the same time, those programs receive the prospective student's contact information as well and reach out promptly. Beginning in Program Year 2024, all One-Stops and Workforce Board staff will receive training in how to assist students in using the link and providing the link on their websites, via flyers and trained staff in their physical locations, and in their correspondence with potential students. In this way, NMHED-AE provides access to their services at the One-Stop.

An over-arching, system-wide priority for Title II, and our work with partners, is to reduce barriers to access to education, training, and the workforce for New Mexico adult learners through improved collaboration between core partners. To this end, NMHED-AE seeks to:

- - Improve referrals between WIOA core title partners in each workforce development area, boosting co-enrollments for improved service and outcomes for New Mexico adults.
 - Align data sharing requirements and system between Titles I and II.
 - Collaborate with Title IV partners to support learners with disabilities.
 - Strengthen relationships between all local core partners and raise awareness of services available to students by encouraging regular visits of local core partners to Adult Education programs to speak to students and, if possible, to be co-located at the college.
 - Collaborate with Title I partners to evaluate, refine, and strengthen WIOA I application process, including clear instructions and guidance, to support adult education student access to Title I services, promoting increased equity for learners.
 - Ensure that equitable services are provided for students who speak English as a second language, prioritizing the needs of immigrant newcomers to the state.

On the programmatic level, Adult Education's strategic priorities include:

- - The strengthening and expansion of Integrated Education and Training (IET). IET is a national model for workforce development in Adult Education. IET programs help adult learners attain the competencies and credentials needed for in-demand occupations. Adult Education seeks to collaborate with our Title I partners to support IET students to access funding for the workforce training component of IET programs and facilitate employer access, and with our Title IV partners to support learners with disabilities.
 - Improved alignment of adult education instructional services with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS) and, where applicable, the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) with the goals of high-quality and continuously improved service to learners.

- Digital equity for all New Mexicans and digital literacy for adult education students, so that learners may participate fully in our society, communities, and workforce.
- Maintaining a system-wide goal to serve as many eligible New Mexicans as possible. Access to Adult Education services must be equitable for all eligible learners, including English language learners and immigrants, justice-involved and institutionalized individuals, individuals with disabilities, and New Mexicans who have low levels of literacy.
- NMHED-ED prioritizes investment in our teachers and all staff through professional development, including teacher certification opportunities, and fair compensation and pay equity at a state level.

At the State agency level, NMHED collaborates directly with core WIOA and other Combined State Plan partners. Enhancing coordination at the State level is an area of significant strategic focus for Title II, with particular emphasis on collaborations around sector strategies and career pathway development. Part of the role of the Program Specialist and the State Director in NMHED's Adult Education Division is to support workforce development collaboration and partnership efforts for Adult Education. Title II will have "access" as defined in 34 CFR 463.305, by (1) having the option to have a program staff member physically present at the one-stop center; and (2) having the option to have a staff member from a different partner program physically present at the one-stop center appropriately trained to provide information to customers about the programs, services, and activities available through partner programs. Title II is already making available a direct linkage through technology to program staff who can provide meaningful information or services, through an online student portal and associated staff training on an annual basis.

Strategic state-level priority activities include: (1) Working collaboratively with partners to identify and eliminate barriers to access--especially as they relate to system barriers--and developing effective messaging for stakeholders to increase system engagement and support. An area of ongoing priority for NMHED-AE is collaborating with core partners to strength the Title I application process, including clear instructions and guidance, to support adult education student access to Title I services, promoting increased equity for learners (2) Ensuring continued Adult Education engagement with the WIOA core partner leadership team; with the State and all four local workforce investment boards; and with related committees and work groups, to include those which might be convened to support career pathway development and/or regional sector strategy work. (3) Engaging individuals and organizations with significant local and national-level expertise to advise and collaborate with NMHED and other core partners in areas of high strategic priority, including the coordinated statewide development of priority sector strategies and career pathways for industry sectors the governor identifies as highest priority; (4) Collaborating with DWS and core WIOA partners to build a streamlined referral system to promote co-enrollment; and (5) Providing and participating in cross-agency training and professional development.

NMW Works staff are co-located within the NM WCC's throughout the state to assist with client needs and in person services. This also allows for partnership between the multiple WIOA WCC located partners and a comprehensive case management approach to each individual seen in person at a WCC location. The ability to manage multiple needs for a customer at a single

location also allows for the collaboration of their case management plan between partners reducing duplication of services and focused attention to each individual aspect of a client development need. TANF coordinates services to individuals through referrals to:

- Online and in-person opportunities to attend community job fairs and hiring events.
- Subsidized employment programs (Career Link and Wage Subsidy) based on education, career goals, work history, and identified skills.
- Online and in-person vocational skill/training programs, e.g., CNM, Goodwill, Workforce Connections, Khan Academy, Alison.com, and colleges and programs throughout both New Mexico and across the nation.
- Assist Individuals in applying for other programs such as TANF VT, WIOA (OJT) Apprenticeship Programs, Veterans Programs, Education Works Program, Transitional Bonus Program, Job Search and Job Readiness (utilizing WCOS).
- Assist individual with Resume Building, Interview Skills, Soft Skills and Personal Branding.
- Target job development and job matching with area employers through sponsoring job fairs, community networking and events including targeted “essential job” opportunities, and meeting business needs with qualified personnel.
- High School Equivalency (HSE) services: NM DWS has developed a close operational partnership with UNM’s ACCE program, in conjunction with Career Link, to support the successful completion of HSE for NM TANF participants still lacking a high school diploma equivalent. TANF participants can take part in these services at specific locations throughout the state and virtually via online supports.

NMDWS utilizes a comprehensive list of Work Experience and Community Service sites for participants who need additional work skills and/or references to increase their job readiness. DWS places New Mexico Works participants at sites focused on pairing participant career goals with skill development locations, increasing effective job development through enhanced preparation and experience directly aimed at assisting with the attainment of employment in the identified career field of choice. NMDWS also has an extensive list of employment partners and is able to identify new sites for participants to fit their skill sets and match specific employment goals.

SNAP E&T participants can be served by more than one provider. For example, one provider can work with another to help the same participant achieve their individual employment plan goals, while each delivering a different service. It is the provider’s responsibility to coordinate services for co-enrolled participants to prevent duplication of service. Duplication of service means an individual receives the same service from more than one provider at the same time. HSD encourages E&T providers to collaborate and make referrals for services that they do not have available. Providers must network, maintain partnerships, and research a variety of resources in each respective community so that the participant who reports a barrier has a variety of options.

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.

The entities carrying out the respective core programs, the 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.

NMDWS works closely with all partners to provide the following employer services:

1. Outreach to promote the use of Workforce Connection Center facilities and services
2. Entry, review, and maintenance of job listings in the Workforce Connection On- Line System
3. Filling job listings
4. Specialized assessment and testing of applicants
5. Workforce Connection Online System technical assistance
6. Recruitment assistance, i.e. employment hiring events
7. Training services
8. Response to layoffs and business closures

SNAP E&T collaborates with the Central Region LWDB and has established quarterly meetings to review program efforts and statewide Industry Spotlight data. The 2022 data was reviewed to align the top 5 occupations and top 3 Industries in New Mexico to the SNAP E&T components. Per the report the top five occupation in New Mexico for 2022 were Office and Administrative Support, Sales and Related, Food Preparing and Serving Related, lastly Transportation and Material Moving. The top three Industries were Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services.

SNAP E&T providers will create collaborations and partnerships with employers to provide participants with the opportunity to perform in any of the industries mentioned above or of their interest.

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.

The State's strategies will engage 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. 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.

The Division of Adult education at the NM Higher Education Department (NMHED-AE) promotes high-quality services through the provision of professional development and technical assistance to local programs. First, NMHED-AE, through a contract with the state's adult education professional organization, the New Mexico Adult Education Association (NMAEA), maintains a technical assistance and professional development website: Propelnm.org. On this site, practitioners and program administrators can access fiscal, program management, and monitoring tools and forms, policies and guidelines, content area-specific resources, outside technical assistance and professional development websites like LINCS and many others, news and updates, a professional development calendar, and contact information.

NMHED funds the statewide adult education system, Propel, through federal leadership funds and another state funding source. Many of the emerging professional development opportunities are offered through a password-protected portal linked to Propelnm.org. Propel offers systematic opportunities for professional growth, including long-running nationally-promoted and supported initiatives such as Teaching Skills that Matter (TSTM), Training from the Back of the Room (TBR), and the LEAD Institute. Propel also provides targeted technical assistance on demand and regular webinars on a variety of topics including ESL instruction, digital literacy, instructional technology, and coaching.

In addition, NMHED-AE provides technical assistance in the form of monthly webinars for data professionals, fiscal and programmatic compliance webinars and training, informal meetings and communications with programs by state staff to help solve problems and plan for program improvement, and monthly virtual meetings with all local program directors to provide additional technical assistance, leadership, and promote a community that values continuous program improvement. Finally, NMHED-AE supports and participates in an annual fall conference for all adult education practitioners.

Beginning in PY 2024, NMHED-AE will strategically renew focus on teaching to the state-adopted College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and the aligned English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). NMHED-AE will also collaborate with Propel to develop and continuously refine a certification system for adult education practitioners. This system, along with the activities listed here, will support the strategic priorities of providing high quality instruction and retaining adult education teachers in New Mexico.

SNAP E&T has contracted both Central New Mexico Community College and Clovis Community College to oversee the education program. The Education Program is a component that requires an Orientation, Assessment and Employment Plan. Every participant enrolled in this component (ELA and High School Equivalent) is expected to participate a minimum of 5 hours per week. This will include a meeting with their provider representative monthly. Every participant

enrolled in this component (Career and Technical) is expected to participate a minimum of 3 hours per week. This will include a meeting with their provider representative monthly. Hours will be manually tracked by the E&T provider and placed in case notes through the completion of case management. E&T providers are required to ensure the participants receive the correct resources and guidance to enroll in any of the following programs:

- English Language Acquisition
- High School Equivalent Education Programs
- Career and Technical Education

The SNAP E&T team will continue to enhance the education program and collaborate with other colleges by proposing plans of expansion and requesting Federal funding on the annual state plan submitted to the Federal Nutrition Service (FNS) annually.

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.

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.

For the SNAP E&T Program, CNM and Clovis Community College will oversee English Language Acquisition, High School Equivalent Education Programs, and Career and Technical Education programs. These subcomponents will improve access to certifications or licenses by providing all participants with a warm hand off to the institution that best fits their goals. Extensive case management services, resources and support services will be provided to all participants for the duration of program enrollment.

The TANF Vocational Training program is offered at 21 higher education institutions across New Mexico. The participant works with an Educational Coordinator to ensure they are on track for graduation and a Vocational Training Development Career Coach (VTCC) employed through the Department of Workforce Solutions throughout the program to prepare them for a career upon graduation.

The New Mexico Adult Education system includes a network of 26 local program providers in every workforce region of the state which offer free instruction and training to eligible adults, with an emphasis on career pathways that lead to jobs with family-sustaining wages in high-priority sectors and opportunities for advancement.

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.

The activities identified in (A) are closely coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State. The Secretary of the Economic Development Department (EDD) or their designee sits on the State Workforce Development Board. Points of coordination include:

- NMDWS has two positions that are jointly funded by the Economic Development Department to facilitate coordination between these two departments. These positions have proved invaluable in coordinating sector strategies, Rapid Hire events, and rapid responses to major closures.
- The JTIP program is one of the major economic development initiatives in the State. DWS has a seat on the JTIP board, which enables connection with the workforce system. In 2023, NMDWS and the Economic Development Department created a system through which JTIP recipients receive additional benefits if they use three or more NMDWS or LWDB services.
- EDD coordinates the Sustainable Energy Task Force, on which NMDWS has a permanent seat. This facilitates coordination on initiatives related to the energy transition, including joint funding that both departments received for energy transition in the 2023 legislative session.
- Sector strategies will be developed in close coordination with EDD, both at the state and local level. The Renewable Energy summit in 2022 and the Broadband Summit in December 2023 were the first initiatives along these lines.

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

The following State operating systems include labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, and job banks, that together support implementation of State strategies, including the data collection and reporting processes of core programs and activities.

NMDWS launched the career solutions site designed specifically for high school students looking to plan their next step after graduation. The site provides students with current career information and educational resources, as well as a variety of useful tools to help them explore and choose the right career path. The site is also accessible on mobile devices, giving students a convenient way to utilize career tools while on the go.

The New Mexico Career Solutions site gives students the ability to explore possible occupations related to their skills, background, and interests. Students can compare possible career choices against real-time job listings, as well as conduct job searches to see what opportunities are in

their area when the time comes to apply. Students can save their information and compare occupation profiles to help choose which career they would like to pursue. The site also provides education and training resources for students to review based on their chosen career path, including options to complete financial aid forms and college preparation checklists. Access to the 'Why I Work' application is also featured. This is a financial tool that shows job seekers how much income they need in order to live a selected lifestyle in a specific New Mexico location. The information is based on economic data provided by our Economic Research team.

In addition to the variety of career exploration tools available on the site, students can take advantage of the site's Résumé Builder, Interview Practicing Tool, Letter Builder, information on WorkKeys® assessments, and more. Each tool on the site is user-friendly and designed to help guide students step-by-step in their journey towards reaching their short-term and long-term goals.

Our goal is to provide an easily accessible and personalized virtual one-stop-shop for our citizen customers that intuitively guides them along a personal path to supportive services and employment and training opportunities while maintaining data security. This will mature into a Master Data Management system and ensure further integration among social safety net agency systems. Ultimately, we seek to help create a consistent stream of technologically savvy, work-ready citizens for our New Mexico employers.

Program Data Alignment and Integration

State Level Efforts. NMDWS has established a standardized agreement process for external entities seeking to meet WIOA compliance. NMDWS strongly encourages program providers to utilize the Workforce Connection Online System to conduct case management where appropriate. NMDWS makes adjustments to the system configuration to accommodate this expanded use and provide direct user access for these entities to serve their participants. For entities that have established case management systems, NMDWS provides a mechanism to request and receive wage data electronically within the constraint of existing rules and regulations.

While recognizing the need for appropriate privacy safeguards, data sharing has been established among the partner agencies to enable more efficient use of all resources being applied to the benefit of each customer. NMDWS and the State Workforce Development Board continue to coordinate agreements with its partner agencies to establish a more integrated system and accounting process to enable tracking of services provided to all individuals receiving career services so that actual performance outcomes can be correlated to the investments being made in this area. These efforts allow the State Board to determine where opportunities for improvement exist and identify which practices and programs are yielding the best outcomes. The existing agreements have been refined and implemented in order to facilitate this activity while maintaining compliance with existing regulations established to safeguard the privacy of the individual customer.

Economic Research and Analysis Bureau

The Economic Research and Analysis (ER&A) Bureau within NMDWS supports workforce development and planning by providing labor market information to assist businesses and job seekers in their decision making. Policy makers rely upon labor market information for

informed policy development and to identify solutions that are appropriate for the state of New Mexico and the local communities served by local boards. Through customized reports ER&A supports local communities in their economic development initiatives aimed at attracting employers into a local area. Ultimately the objective is to provide accurate and timely labor market information in a usable format to assist in matching workforce needs with those of job seekers. Local boards rely on this labor market information in a number of ways. For instance, the Southwestern Area Workforce Development Board indicates it uses the information to establish their occupations in demand for an individual training account contract. The information also assists them in determining the workforce needs of employers in their local area and the state, and allows them to make quantitative decisions about the types of trainings programs needed in the area. This information also helps them assist employers who want to know the average wage for a specific position, the type of credential needed for an occupation, the number of jobs available in a certain area, or whether there will be a decline in the need the occupations.

Unemployment (UI) Wage Record Data

NMDWS staff leverages the Workforce Connection Online system as data consolidation point for access to quarterly unemployment insurance (UI) wage records from the UI data base for participants that exit following receipt of services. This wage data is uploaded to the Workforce Connection Online System to meet federal reporting requirements. The State Wage Interchange System (SWISS) was used to obtain wages received from outside the state of New Mexico. This wage data was uploaded into the Workforce Connection Online system and used to calculate performance outcomes.

Access to wage records has been an important issue for many years and is an even greater priority under WIOA. Use of wage records for WIOA core program performance and eligible training provider performance reporting purposes, and disclosure of wage records for certain federal evaluations are mandatory under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)(4)). State workforce, training, and education programs are required to use quarterly wage records to measure the progress of the State on the State and local performance accountability measures, and for obtaining the information required in the Eligible Training Provider List (WIOA Sections 116(i) and 121(d)). Quarterly wage records are the employer-provided wage reports collected under authority in Section 1137 of the SSA (42 USC 1320b-7). These are the reports state UI agencies obtain for UI tax liability and benefit eligibility determination purposes, and also use to detect improper payments. Confidentiality and disclosure of wage records are governed by the regulations at 20 CFR Part 603.

Like other state UI agencies, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions coordinates disclosure of wage records for the mandated purposes for the state to be in compliance with WIOA requirements. To facilitate access to wage records for these purposes, DOL (ETA, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Chief Evaluation Office) has undertaken a number of activities in partnership with other Federal agencies to enable efficient and secure access to confidential wage data as envisioned under WIOA consistent with the guidance provided by U.S. DOL, including cross matching wage records with educational data, which is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. §1232g.

Wage information, defined in 20 CFR Part 603.2(k), includes the three data categories or elements that states must use for WIOA performance reporting purposes: wages, Social Security

Number(s), and employer information. Federal regulations at 20 CFR Part 603.5(e) permit states to disclose confidential unemployment compensation (UC) information “to a public official for use in the performance of his or her official duties.” Performance of official duties means “administration or enforcement of law or the execution of the official responsibilities of a Federal, State, or local elected official.” Generally, under these regulations, disclosures of confidential UC information that WIOA requires are already permissible. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions has established agreements to work collaboratively with one-stop partners to meet the requirements for use of wage records under WIOA.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE, 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 AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

Co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes

NMDWS administers a common management information system, called the Workforce Connection Online System, described earlier. The Workforce Connection Centers use the system not only for registering job applicants, housing resumes, and job postings for job matching purposes, but also for the purposes of data entry, case management, and state and federal performance reporting. The Workforce Connection Online System integrates data collection, participant demographics, case management, and performance reporting for not only Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Wagner-Peyser, but also Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, Veterans, Trade programs. The system is also used for data collection and reporting for all partners located in comprehensive and affiliate centers. NMDWS has established both user access and data sharing agreements to support access to information and information sharing between the partners as allowed by authorizing law and regulation. The system also provides access to labor market information to support business and job seekers in need of training or employment assistance.

The NMDWS has also established a “Common Unique Identifier” (CUID) which applies to external WIOA citizen-customers across agencies and software applications. NMDWS sought to create a virtual one stop system by collecting and analyzing the availability, structure, accuracy, and completeness of partner agency data, which are qualified as the personal identifying information (PII) of individuals, who interact with Unemployment Insurance, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Employment Services, NM's Higher Education Department (HED), NM's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and NM's Commission for the Blind (CFB) in accordance with WIOA.

DWS built automated processes using ODI – Oracle Data Integrator and OEDQ – Oracle Enterprise Data Quality to perform record extraction, comparison, matching, and “CUID” creation in an efficient manner. The DWS automated system compares WIOA Core Program partner data and, then, creates and maintains a Common Unique Identifier. Once created, the CUID captures and stores data needed to report and communicate the CUID information back to the source systems for incorporation into their reporting datasets. In short, New Mexico has been able to utilize the CUID to facilitate the exchange of information about an individual among

the source systems. Finally, NMDWS generates a data validation report to maintain and validate the data quality and communicate to the partner agencies when requested. As the CUID continues to add data, it will mature into a Master Data Management system and ensure further integration among all participating agencies' systems.

The significance of the Common Unique Identifier cannot be overstated because it has opened up new avenues for exchanging data about individuals between systems and programs, which provide case managers in all partner agencies with a more complete view of individual customer needs, activities, strengths, and pain points. This also ensures that partner agency staff e.g., case managers, career coaches, and customer service representatives, are not unnecessarily duplicating efforts in terms of documentation, resources, training, wrap-around services and the like. Ultimately, CUID allows limited state resources to provide customers with comprehensive case management, employment services, and wrap-around benefits in a more responsive, accurate, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

NMDWS has established a common intake system or "Single Sign On" (SSO) for staff and citizen customers. The SSO is shared across multiple WIOA partner programs and minimizes time lost to duplicative data entry and account maintenance. Importantly, SSO speeds up service to citizens. We did this through building an Enterprise Service Bus that hosts Application Program Interfaces. Finally, with both CUID and SSO in place, we were able to establish a personalized Citizen Self-Service Landing page called "My Workforce Connection." This landing page is complete with intuitive, nudge technology that guides customers along a personal path to supportive services and employment and training opportunities.

"My Workforce Connection" has dramatically streamlined and personalized the entire social safety net citizen experience for New Mexico's citizens and partner agencies. Specifically, right now, "My Workforce Connection" means New Mexico's citizens are:

- No longer required to establish accounts and remember several different passwords across social safety net programs,
- No longer required to enter the same personal data several times,
- No longer required to decide which services or supports they may need from a vast menu of potentially available and
- New Mexico's safety net agencies no longer must try to identify, from the backend, which services and supports the same customer may have received from different agencies to determine the effectiveness of the services and supports provided for follow-up and reporting purposes.

Local Level Efforts. Local board grant agreements require the local boards to develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, and workers and jobseekers through the following:

- Facilitating connections among the intake and case management information systems of the one-stop partner programs to support a comprehensive workforce development system in the local area;

- Facilitating access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including access in remote areas;
- Identifying strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery, and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills; and leveraging resources and capacity within the local workforce development system, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment.

Program-Specific Policies

Adult Education (AE) uses a powerful data management tool called the Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System (LACES). All data is captured in this database and it is used to generate federal and state reporting on AE performance. LACES provides an online student portal at studentportal.literacypro.com/nm/home, which partner organizations can use to refer potential students to local AE programs. This is the main automated system through which Adult Education can currently receive referrals from statewide partners, including core title partners. In addition, the state uses the DiplomaSender data management service at diplomasender.com to maintain all state high school equivalency (HSE) records.

The Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED-AE) maintains two websites. The first is directed to the public and provides information on AE and HSE services at https://hed.nm.gov/students-parents/adult_education. The second is directed to the AE field and provides a wealth of information and professional learning for practitioners: Propelnm.org. The Propel professional learning portal (PPLP) is also housed at this website and practitioners use this system to access and track their professional learning activities and compliance with state policy on paid professional development.

The vocational rehabilitation programs use a case management system called Accessible Web-based Activity Reporting Environment (AWARE) that is specifically designed for vocational rehabilitation programs. This system enables counselors to manage cases, managers to monitor cases, and the agency to prepare and submit required reports to RSA in a timely manner. All client data is captured and maintained in the AWARE case management system, such as information on client employment outcomes, including position title, employer, wages, hours, benefits, etc., and is provided to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U. S. Department of Education through quarterly and annual reports. Alliance Enterprises, the software's developer, revises the system to capture reportable data related to WIOA. Due to the especially strict confidentiality requirements imposed by the Rehabilitation Act and the sensitive nature of information about disabilities and medical conditions, the case management system is a closed system, accessible only by authorized employees. NMDWS has established a data sharing agreement to provide necessary wage data to support the programs' activities.

Automated System Program and Eligibility Network (ASPEN) is used by ISD eligibility workers to determine SNAP and TANF eligibility. This is also the system in which the worker refers participants to E&T. This referral is then received in Workpath, where all case management data is maintained. SNAP E&T and TANF are constantly networking to create collaborations with other agencies, to provide resources and additional support services.

. These policies are all publicly available at propelnm.org under the Policies and Accountability tab.

The Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED-AE) designates one adult education local program provider in each of the four state workforce areas to carry the roles and responsibilities of the infrastructure cost-sharing agreements (IFA). However, all adult education local program providers are signatories to an annual memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local One-Stop and Local Workforce Development Board. In addition, Adult Education-specific MOU addenda are under development in every workforce area, in order to facilitate the specific collaborations between Titles I and II necessary in each region.

VR agencies have the ability to enter into “cooperative agreements” with partner entities and are required to have cooperative agreements with specific entities such as higher education. As such, the VR agencies have MOUs with the New Mexico Department of Public Education regarding consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services; transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education plans; roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Both VR agencies maintain a Manual of Operating Procedures which will be updated to reflect WIOA and other changes, as appropriate. The manuals provide guidance for assessment, determination of eligibility, order of selection, if necessary, service provision, documentation, case closure and other topics having to do with direct service provision. In addition, the VR agencies have policies that govern interaction with core partners, such as referrals and transfers to and from the agencies. In addition, the VR agencies provide services that are customized to the unique needs and “informed choice” of the individual consumer who has the right to challenge decisions that they do not agree with, which includes an impartial due process hearing.

ASPEN and Workpath are the two data systems that HSD utilizes to complete the SNAP E&T and TANF screening, referral, and case management process. HSD is currently working with The Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) to create collaborations amongst agencies to create a universal intake system that aligns with all one stop partner programs.

State’s guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs’ contributions to a one-stop delivery system and any additional guidance for one-stop partner contributions

NMDWS issues state-level policies and technical assistance guides to support the implementation of WIOA implementation. Information is available on-line and can be found at <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/WIOA-Policy-Plans-Annual-Reports>

- Electronic File Content Management STAG (May 2015) – Policy regarding electronic file storage and imaging standards for workforce programs utilizing the New Mexico Workforce Connection On-Line System – NMWCOS).
- WIOA Eligibility STAG (July 2015) – Introductory guide summarizing key concepts and requirements of WIOA eligibility for basic career services, individualized career services, training services, supportive services, follow-up and eligible training providers.
- DWS 16-001 – One-Stop Operator. This workforce guidance letter provides information, criteria, and guidance that encourage Local Workforce Development Boards to establish One-Stop Operator scopes of works that meet requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- DWS 16-002 – One-Stop Certification. To provide guidance, process, and deadlines for the certification of the Workforce Connection Centers and one-stop delivery system conducted by the local workforce development boards, and to set criteria for the development of local policy for one-stop certification.
- DWS 16-003 – Local Governance. This policy provides guidance on the appointment of local boards and outlines the roles, responsibilities and authority of the chief elected officials and the local boards in regard to the local workforce system.
- DWS 16-004 – Eligible Training Provider Certification System. This guidance provides new information, criteria, and procedures that inform the local workforce development boards, local administrative entities and workforce system partners of changes to the Eligible Training Provider system.
- DWS 16-005 – One-Stop Common Identifier. This guidance provides new information, criteria, and procedures that inform the local workforce development boards, local administrative entities and workforce system partners of changes to the Eligible Training Provider system.
- DWS 16-006 – Infrastructure Funding. These guidelines fulfill the WIOA requirement that the Governor issue guidance to State and local partners for negotiating cost sharing, service access, service delivery and other matters essential to the establishment of effective local workforce development services.
- DWS 16-007 – Self Sufficiency. To update the State WIOA Self-Sufficiency Wage Standards for grant recipients on the use when determining eligibility for participants in need of Individualized Career Services and/or Training Services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- DWS 16-008 – Incumbent Workers. The purpose of this guidance is to provide direction to Local Workforce Development Boards regarding the permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds for training activities associated with incumbent workers.
- DWS 17-002 – Transfer of Funds. To provide guidance and specific procedures for transferring of funds between the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs by outlining the criteria and information required when submitting a request to transfer.

- DWS 17-003 – Use of Supplemental Wage Data. To provide direction to workforce system stakeholders regarding permissible use of supplemental wage information to assist in fulfilling the performance accountability requirements under §116 of WIOA.
- DWS 18-001 – Procurement and Contracting. To provide policy guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB), One-Stop Career Center Operators and other local workforce investment partners with respect to the state’s policy regarding procurement and contracting requirements.
- DWS 18-002 – Individual Training Account – Change 2 The purpose of this guidance is to provide direction to Local Workforce Development Board in the development of a local policy on Individual Training Accounts.
- DWS 18-003 - Negotiating Performance Goals with WIOA Title 1 PYS 2018 and 2019. To inform local boards and the Chief Elected Officials of the guidelines for the negotiation process for the WIOA title 1 programs for PY 2018 and 2019.
- DWS 18-004 – Youth Program Eligibility. To provide direction to workforce systems stakeholders including Local Workforce Development Boards and youth program service providers, the Youth Eligibility Requirements for WIOA Title 1 Youth Program.
- DWS 18-005 – Assistance to Wage Claimants. Provides information and procedures to Local Workforce Development Boards regarding providing assistance to individuals who wish to file wage claims in the Workforce Connection Centers.
- DWS 18-006 – On-the-Job-Training. To provide guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards on the development of local policies and procedures to administer On-the-Job-Training (OJT) contracts under WIOA Title 1 Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs.
- DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 1- Issued - 06.10.2019
- DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 2- Issued – 05.26.2020
- DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 3 (Reimbursement Waiver)- Issued – 01.07.2022
- DWS 20-001 Negotiating Performance Goals – Issued – 01.01.2020
- DWS 20-002 NMDWS Adult/Dislocated Worker Eligibility – Issued- 12.08.2021
- DWS 20-003 DWG Statewide long-term unemployed definition – Issued – 12.10.2021
- DWS 22-001 WIOA Self Sufficiency Policy – Issued – 07.03.2023

Additionally, two policies issued through the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) include:

- Title 11 Chapter 2 Part 4 – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Governance. This policy outlines the local governance structure in New Mexico as required by WIOA, to administer the implementation of workforce development activities in the designated regions. This policy also provide guidance on the appointment of local boards and outlines the roles, responsibilities and authority of the CEOs and the local boards in regard to the local workforce system.

- Title 11 Chapter 2 Part 21 – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Grievance and Complaint Resolution Procedures. This policy establishes procedures for processing grievances and complaints as required by WIOA. These procedures apply to all levels of the New Mexico workforce system and covers equal opportunity requirements, discrimination grievances, state and local WIOA complaints and criminal fraud and abuse.

In addition, the following fiscal policies have been updated to align with WIOA expectations.

- #04-03 – Allowable Cost.
- #04-04 – Allowable Use of Funds and Adherence to UG
- #04-05 – Cash Management.
- #04-06 – Subrecipient Monitoring and Management.
- #04-07 – Time and Labor Reporting.

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.

This section describes the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure and includes organizational charts.

1. *Department of Workforce Solutions*

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) is designated as the State Administrative Entity (SAE) for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. In their role as the SAE, they are responsible for supporting the State Workforce Development Board, which provides leadership, vision and strategy for New Mexico's workforce system. In this role, NMDWS is responsible for organizing and facilitating a workforce development system that creates value and offers employers, individuals, and communities the resources necessary to achieve and sustain a talent pipeline needed to sustain and retain economic prosperity for the state. Specifically, NMDWS is the lead agency responsible for the fiscal and program administration of the following core programs as specified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act:

- Adult Program (WIOA, Title I),
- Dislocated Worker Program (WIOA, Title I),
- Youth Program (WIOA, Title I)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III)

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions provides oversight of WIOA programs by contracting with four Local Workforce Development Boards to provide the required activities

outlined in WIOA. The boards represent a wide variety of individuals, businesses, and organizations throughout the local area who work to:

- Support an effective relationship between the Chief Elected Officials, economic development, education, and workforce partners throughout the local area;
- Develop a regional strategy to continuously improve and strengthen the workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs necessary to promote economic growth and support regional industry;
- Participate and collaborate with the required and other partners of the workforce development system, including public and private organizations; and
- Integrate and align an effective, job-driven workforce development system to meet the needs of regional businesses.

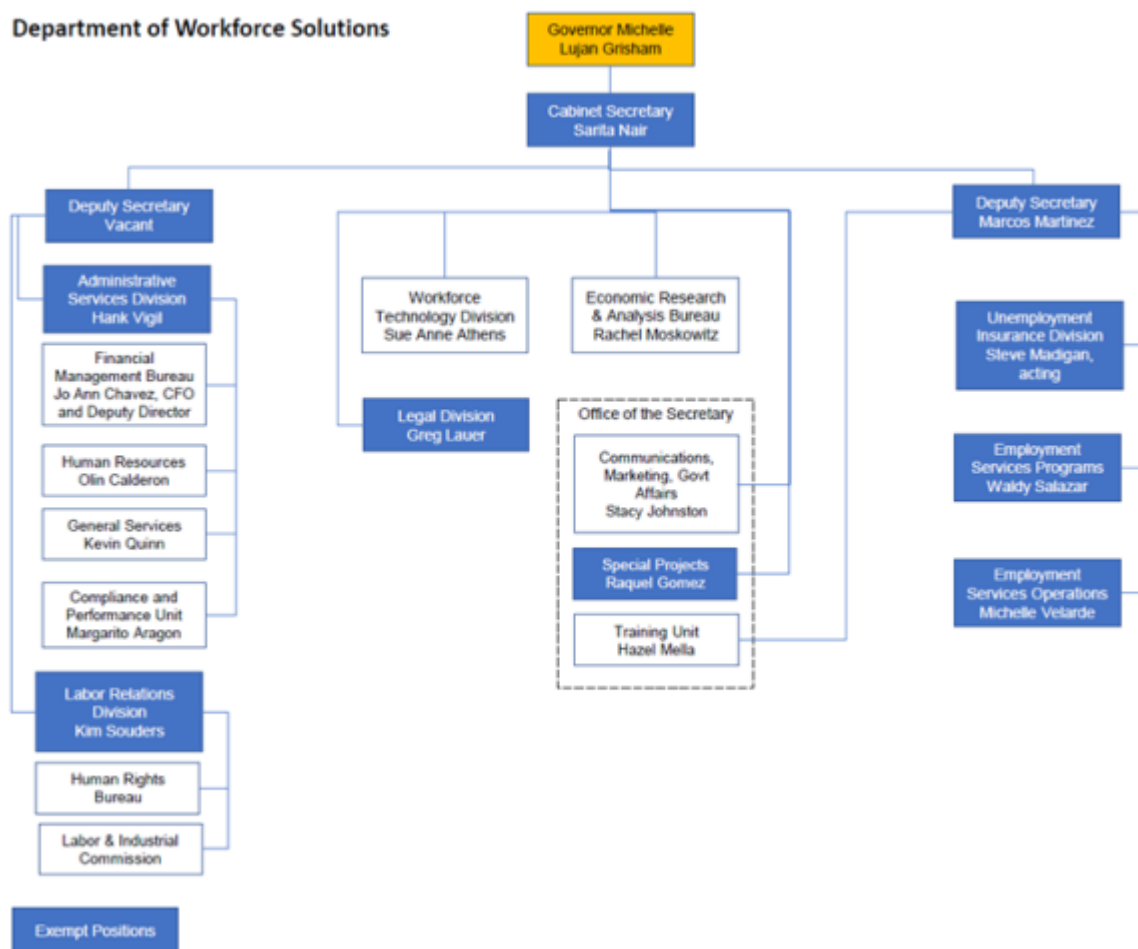
The chief elected officials in each local area serve as the local grant recipients for WIOA funds allocated to the local area. The NMDWS, as the State Administrative Entity for the administration of WIOA, allocates WIOA funds for services to youth, adults, and dislocated workers based on the U.S. Department of Labor-mandated formulas. Availability of WIOA funds is predicated upon receipt of federal allocations, and subject to required formula disbursements and rescission. Funds the local boards do not expend within the specified period are subject to reversion to the State pursuant to applicable law. Upon receipt of a fully executed grant agreement and all required attachments, the funds are made available to the local boards. Allocation letters, notices of increases and/or decreases in funding, or reallocation must be incorporated as modifications to this agreement.

WIOA requires chief elected officials and Local Workforce Development Boards to constitute WIOA-compliant boards through the appropriate local board appointments. For each local area the members of local boards are selected by the chief elected officials consistent with criteria established pursuant to WIOA section 107(b)(1) and required to meet the composition described in WIOA section 107(b)(2). Local boards must comply with New Mexico Open Meetings Act and Inspection of Public Records Act. Additionally, local board must elect chairpersons from among the business representatives on the boards. The local boards oversee the administration of funds for adult/dislocated worker and youth programs and are directly responsible for assuring access to seamless and comprehensive training and support programs. Local boards develop, implement and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of one-stop services for job seekers, employers and workforce partners. NMDWS is responsible for monitoring for compliance of the local boards and for providing ongoing technical assistance and training to ensure performance and quality.

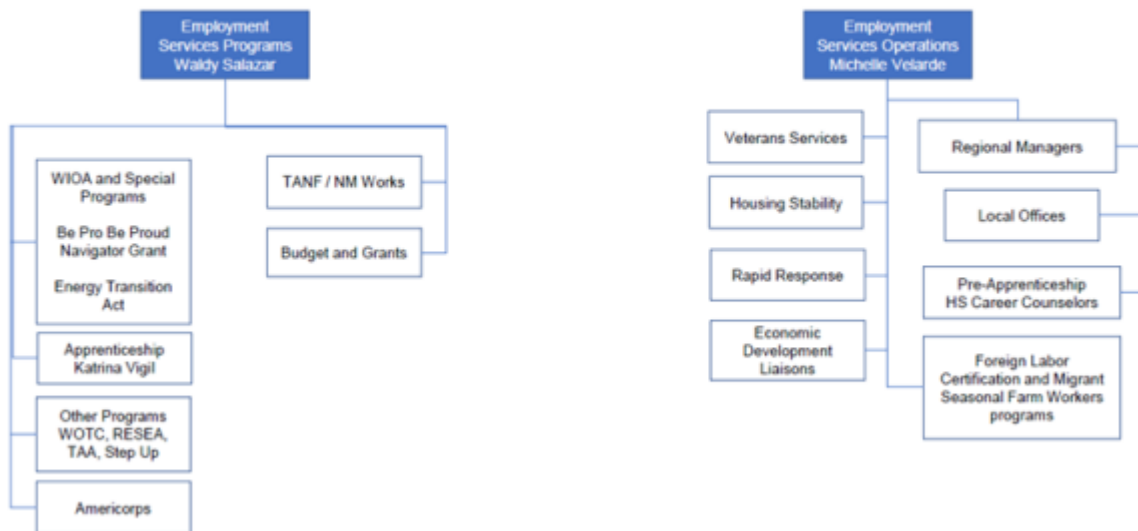
The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions also administers Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, which it does from the state level through its Employment Services Division, along with the administration of Trade Adjustment Assistance, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Rapid Response, and Veterans programs. NMDWS receives funding from USDOL to hire and oversee state merit staff responsible for direct delivery of the Wagner Peyser employment services and the other related services to jobseekers and employers. Merit staff is located throughout 23 field offices and the programs are co-located with the WIOA adult/dislocated

worker and youth programs in every local board area. Employment Services are provided as part of the one-stop delivery system. Currently, each local workforce development area has at least one comprehensive workforce development center that includes, at a minimum, three partners: WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, and access to Unemployment Insurance services. Access to other required partners, such as vocational rehabilitation, adult literacy and education, and TANF, is also available through itinerate and/or onsite staff. All Wagner Peyser Staff are trained and prepared to provide meaningful information and resources to support and manage referrals across programs.

Each Employment Services field office is assigned a site manager who ensures the workforce centers are universally accessible, customer centered, and training is job driven. This includes providing easy access to and assistance with workforce related activities, such as looking for a job, exploring work preparation and career development services, as well as seamless referral to WIOA employment, on-the-job-training, and occupational training programs. Employment Services staff work cooperatively and collaboratively with the Local Workforce Development Boards, site managers and One-Stop Operators, and other workforce partners, to effectively serve both employers and jobseekers. A key role of this program is to identify potential matches between employers and jobseekers. The program's service delivery approach includes self-service, facilitated self-help, and staff-assisted services, and involves a number of other tools and resources. The organizational chart for New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, in which the WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs are situated, follows.

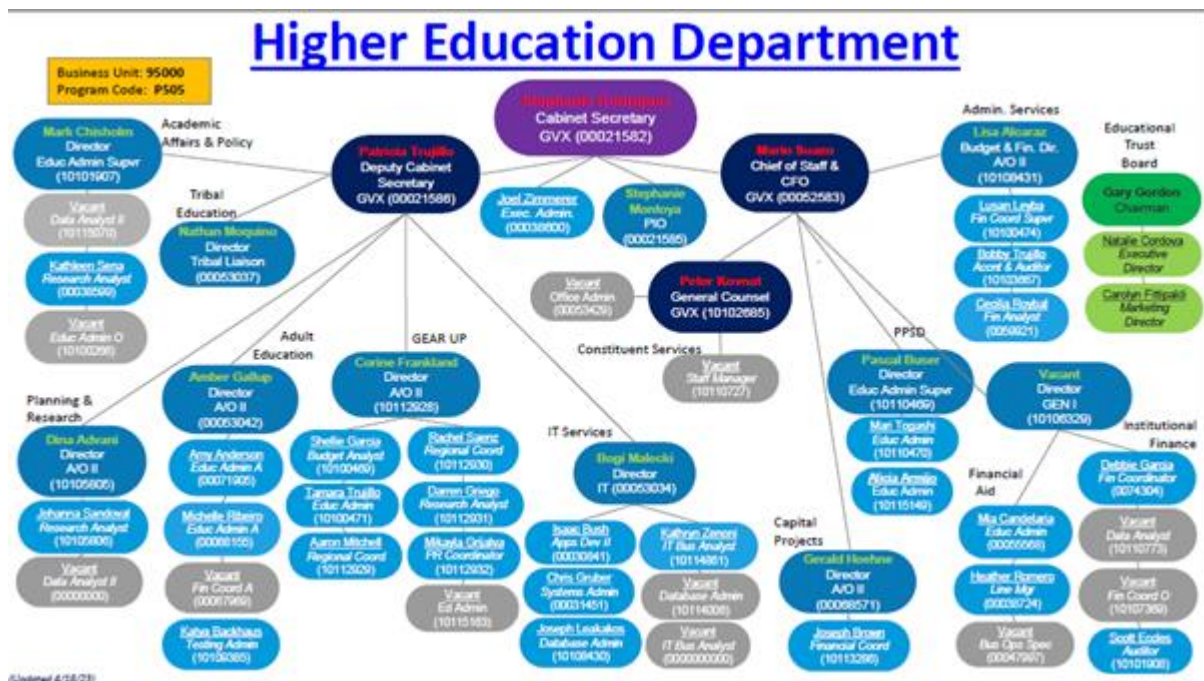


Employment Service Divisions



2. Higher Education Department – Adult Education

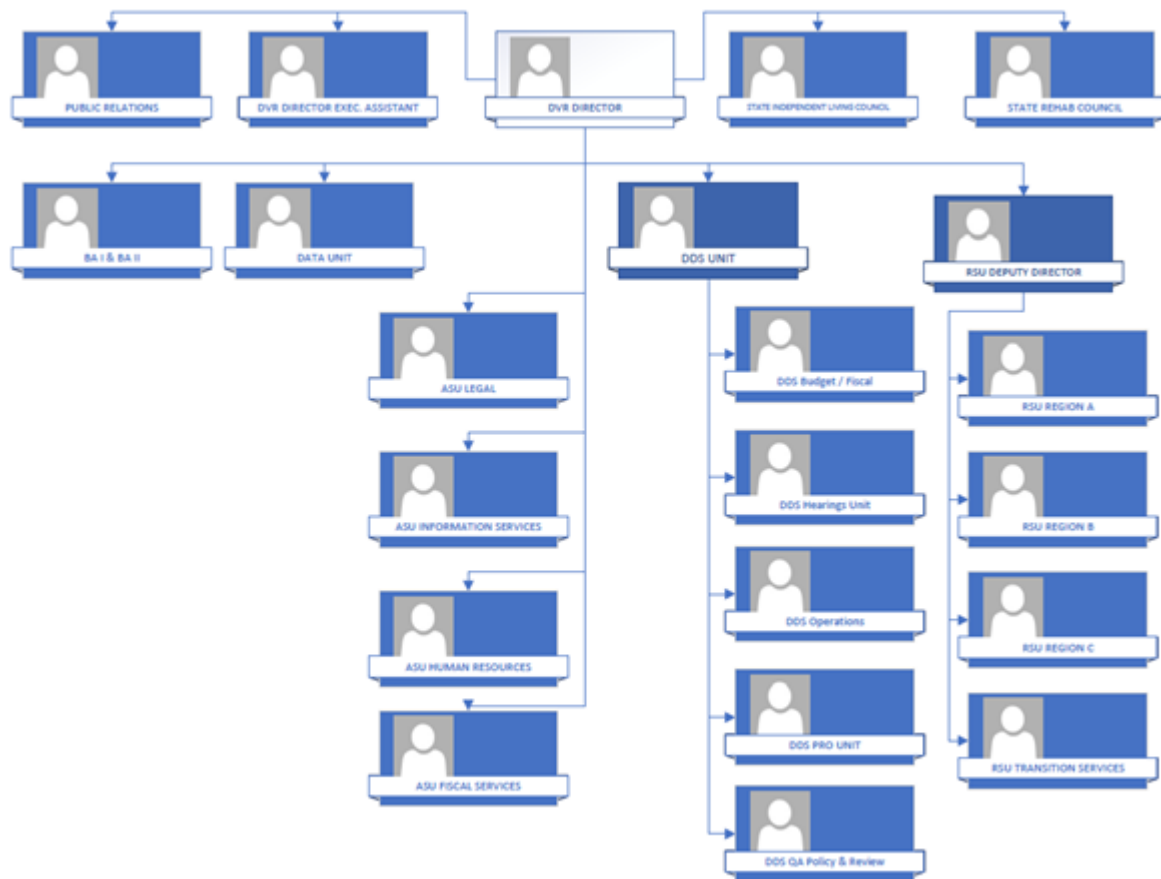
Adult Education in New Mexico is administered by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED), which provides leadership, services, support, and technical expertise to Adult Education program personnel, students, partners and communities. At the State level, the Director of the Adult Education Division (AE) reports to the deputy Secretary of NMHED. The Adult Education Director oversees a Finance Officer, a Grants Administrator, a Program Specialist, and a staff person who is a half-time High School Equivalency (HSE) Testing Administrator (not funded nor governed by WIOA) and a half-time Adult Education Data Administrator. These positions (with the exception of the HSE Testing Administrator role) are funded through WIOA and a state legislative appropriation to the Higher Education Department to fulfill WIOA Maintenance of Effort requirements. The Adult Education Director also funds and oversees Propel, the state's professional development system for adult education, and a number of consultants and/or temporary employees, and sponsored term position providing extra support to the Finance Officer and Data Administrator. The statewide Adult Education system currently includes 26 funded, local Adult Education providers.



3. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Public Education Department

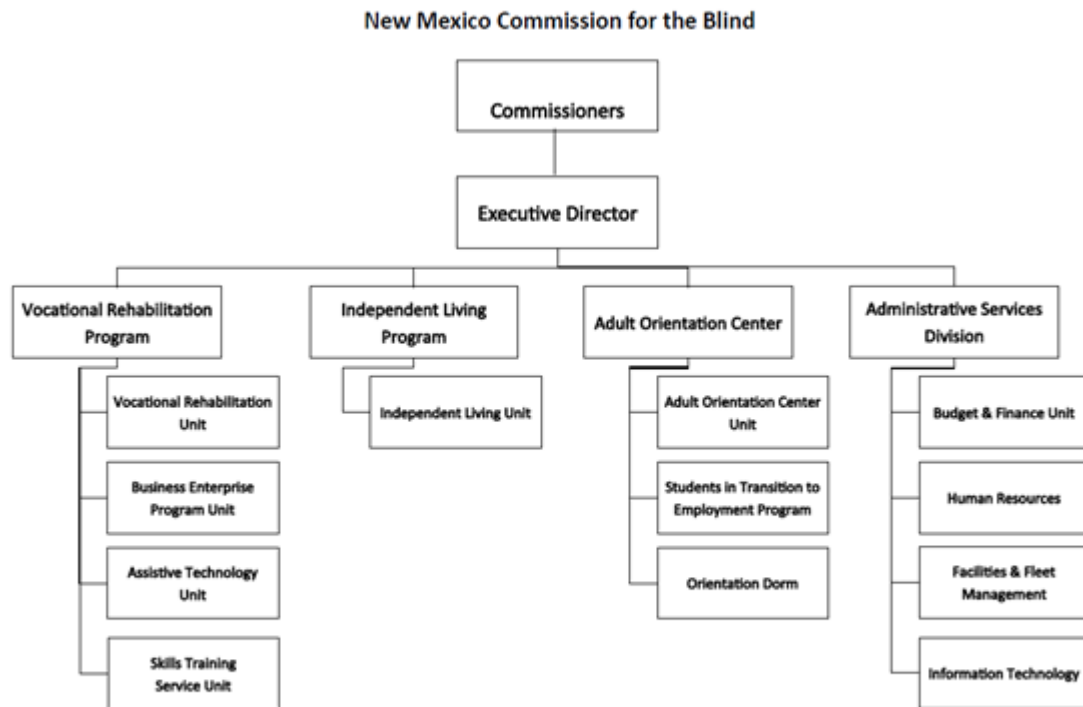
DVR, a division of the New Mexico Public Education Department, assists individuals with disabilities to find, retain, and/or maintain suitable employment by providing vocational guidance, assistance, and services on an individualized basis. DVR consists of nine regions across the state, with 27 field offices. Three Field Operation Directors (FODs) each oversee a region in rehabilitation services throughout the state. Each area has a Program Manager (PM) who oversees daily operations of their respective area offices. DVR opens cases for participants as early as age 14 and may provide services to participants through adulthood. DVR provides services through an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Depending on an individual's specific needs, a wide array of services can be provided to obtain suitable, competitive, and integrated employment. Some services and training that may be considered, but are not limited to, are as follows: evaluations, Pre-Educational Training Services, counseling and guidance, medical and psychological treatment, rehabilitation engineering, employment equipment, job training, job coaching, job placement, job readiness skills, transportation, and other services needed to maintain employment.

DVR also supports educational linkages through Pre-Employment Transition Services in 89 school districts and 87 charter schools for a total outreach of a 150 school sites statewide. To expand programs and services to individuals and/or youth who are eligible for supported employment services, DVR sponsors 12 Project Search sites in Albuquerque, Gallup, Rio Rancho, Las Cruces, and Farmington. DVR sponsors work-based experiences for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in Taos through the Rock-Mountain Youth-Assisted Dogs of the West program. In Central New Mexico, DVR sponsors work-based experiences for Supported Employment students at Mandy's Farm. DVR also facilitates work-based experiences through the Project Hope program in the Pueblos of Jemez, Zia, Santa Ana, Sandia, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti. Moreover, DVR is engaged in the 511 WIOA process by meeting employees with disabilities who make subminimum wage at 14c worksites and advising them about competitive, integrated employment and resources in the community of Carlsbad Arc (CARC) is only one subminimum wage 14c workshop in New Mexico currently. They have 53 individuals.



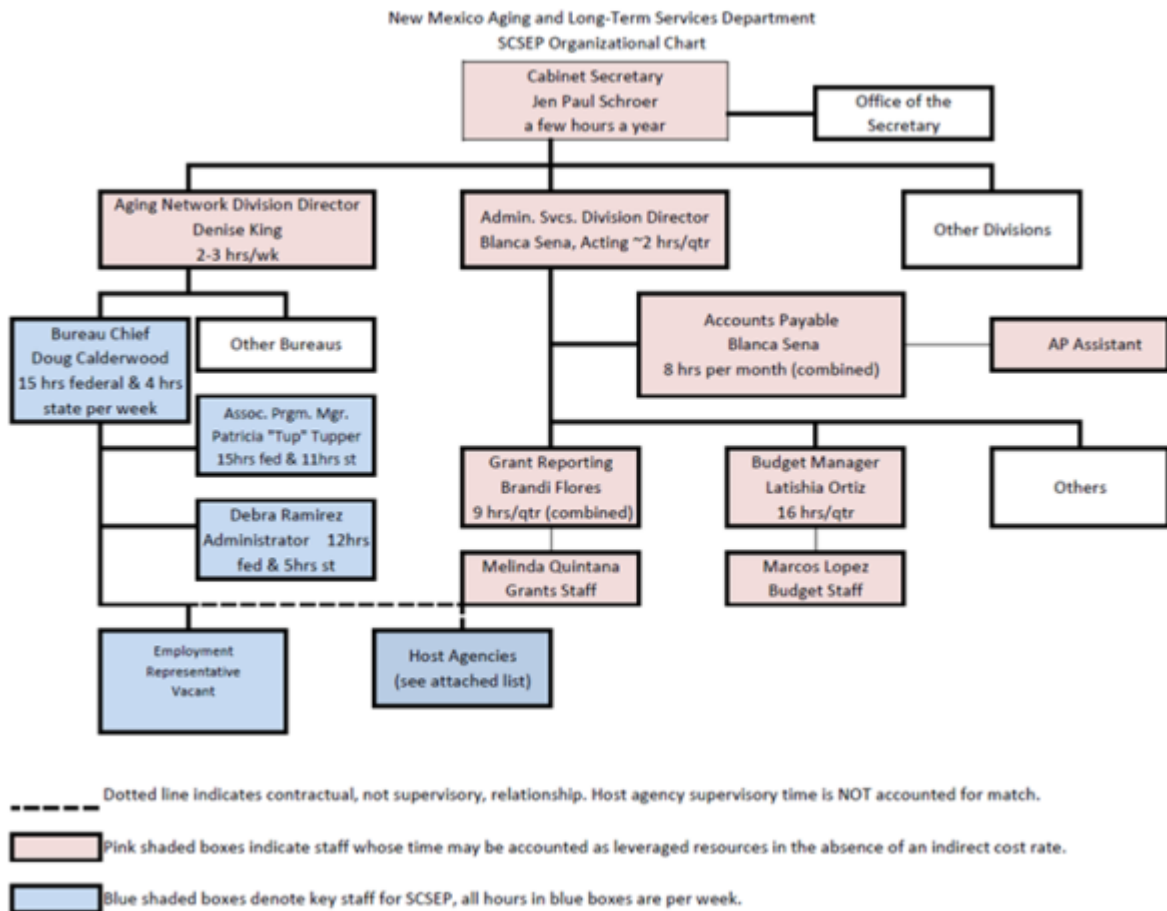
4. NM Commission for the Blind

The Commission for the Blind provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who need and can benefit from these services as it relates to an employment outcome. The Commission has eight vocational rehabilitation counselors located throughout the state, including four in Albuquerque, one in Santa Fe, one in Farmington, one in Roswell, and one in Las Cruces. The Commission typically opens a vocational rehabilitation case starting at age 14, and provides services through an Individualized Plan for Employment. As discussed earlier, examples of the types of services provided include guidance and counseling; transition services that can include participation in a summer youth training program or STEP; the provision of technology equipment, such as computers equipped with screen readers or screen enlargement software, refreshable Braille displays, video magnifiers, or other rehabilitation technology; support attending college or graduate school; job placement services; support in starting a self-employment business; or provision of needed assistive technology to become or remain employed in a specific job. The Commission also operates a residential Page 182 training program in Alamogordo, New Mexico where individuals who are blind can receive six to nine months of intensive training in Braille, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, personal management, home management, and industrial arts. The training is provided by eight highly qualified teachers. The Orientation Center is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities and certified by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board.



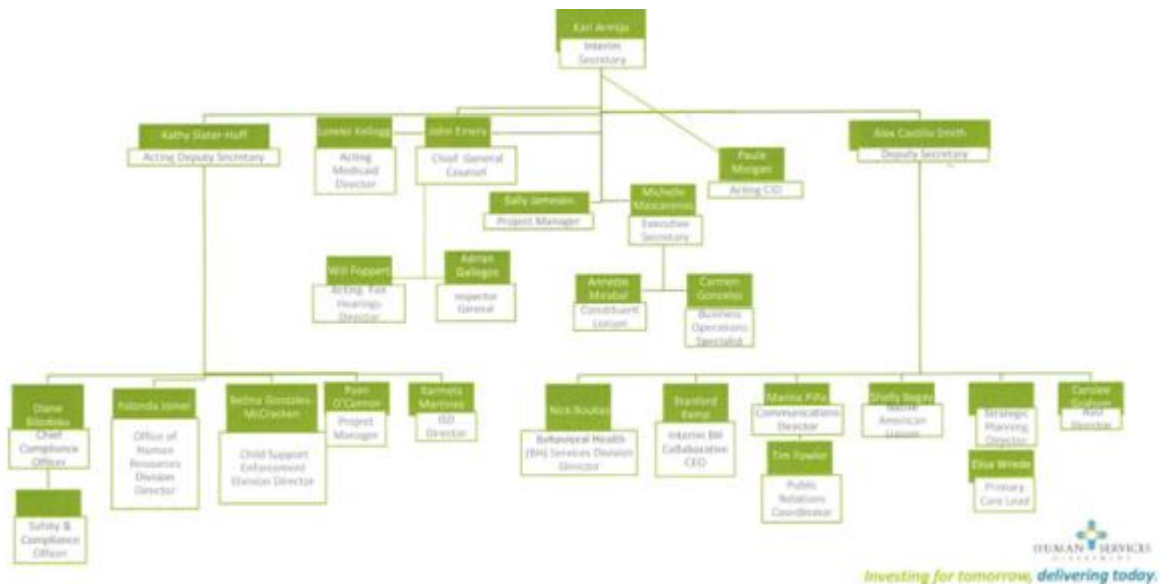
5. Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Aging and Long-Term Services Department

Aging and Long-Term Services Department The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) oversees the State grant from the USDOL for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). In addition, Goodwill Industries is the recipient for New Mexico's national grant from the USDOL for the SCSEP; and the National Indian Council on Aging has a set-aside grant from USDOL to focus on native communities. The state grant is operated directly from the ALTSD's Albuquerque office; there are no subgrantees. Plans are being formulated by ALTSD to focus on training older workers for positions as Community Health Workers. These are positions with national certifications which may be eligible for Medicaid or other federal reimbursement.



6. Human Services Department

The Human Services Department (HSD) Income Support Division (ISD) administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Through the SNAP and TANF safety net programs participants can achieve employment and training support. SNAP offers participants an opportunity to volunteer in the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program, whereas the TANF program requires recipients to complete a work activity to receive TANF benefits. HSD contracts case management services for E&T and TANF programs. Through the contracted services, case managers assess and discuss opportunities for recipients through the program. The case manager along with the participant outlines individual goals and determines if a career or education pathway to employment is best suited for the participant.



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.

The State Workforce Development Board is appointed by the Governor to provide vision and direction for the workforce system and make recommendations to the Governor regarding the workforce system and its overall effectiveness. The State Workforce Development Board and the Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions work in collaboration to ensure the Governor's vision for workforce development is implemented successfully.

The State Workforce Development Board will utilize the committees described above to track the progress and measure the effectiveness of state workforce development activities with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions and plan partners. Additionally, the SWDB will gather and analyze the performance records of the local workforce development boards from the applicable board committees to provide required feedback for performance improvements.

Category	Board Member	Position Title	Organization
Governor's Office	Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham Designee: Alex Greenberg		Office of Governor
Legislators	Senator Carrie Hamblen	Senate Designee	NM Senate
	VACANT	House of Representatives Designee	NM House of Representatives

Category	Board Member	Position Title	Organization
Business Representatives	Joshua Orozco – Board Chair	Vice President	Global Perspectives Integrated
	Carlos Romero – Vice Chair	Owner / CEO	Apex Eval
	Bryn Davis	Director- Asset Managment Services	El Paso Electric
	Dale Decker	Principal Owner	Dekker/Perchi/Sabatini
	Debra Heckes	Founder/ CEO	Exhib-IT
	Mathis Shinnick	CEO/ Chairman	Hanserd Holding LLC
	Deborah Moore	President	Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce
	Johonniuss Chemwenno	Owner/ CEO	Inverse Medical Inc.
	Yashoda Naidoo	Owner	Annapurna's World Vegetarian Café
	Philip Ingram		IPS Services
	Judith D. Cooper	Owner	Beck and Cooper Law Firm
	Vacant		
	Vacant		
	Vacant		
Workforce Representatives	Kelly Roepke-Orth	CEO	Association of General Contractors
	Carl F. Adams	Center Director	Albuquerque Job Corps
	Colby A Wilson	CEO	Boys and Girls Club of Central New Mexico
	Paul Espinosa	Member Albuquerque Chapter	American Legion
	Carla Kugler	President/ CEO	Associated Builder & Contractors
	Ashely N Long	Union Representative	Sheet Metal Workers Union 49

Category	Board Member	Position Title	Organization
Government Representatives	Secretary Sarita Nair	Cabinet Secretary	Dept. of Workforce Solutions
	Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez, Designee: Director Amber Gallup	Cabinet Secretary	Higher Education Department
	Acting Secretary Kari Armijo, Designee: Director Karmela Martinez	Cabinet Secretary	Human Services Department
	Director Greg Trapp	Executive Director	Commission for the Blind
	Commissioner Jon F Crunk	County Commissioner w	Lincoln County CEO
	Commissioner Manuel A Sanchez	County Commissioner	Dona Ana County CEO
	Secretary Arsenio Romero	Cabinet Secretary	Public Education Department
	Acting Secretary Jon Clark	Deputy Secretary	Economic Development Department

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.

The WIOA performance accountability measures in Section 116 will be used to assess the effectiveness of programs ensuring continuous improvement in the service delivery system. To increase awareness, accuracy and transparency, performance reports will be published for each local workforce region. Programs are assessed on their fiscal management, program implementation and data management. The state will identify and target programs for technical assistance that fails to meet performance benchmarks.

New Mexico will use quarterly progress and annual performance to identify area of improvement. Should local areas fall significantly behind in their goals, they will be required to

submit a performance improvement plan outlining the steps needed to bring performance outcomes up to negotiated standards. Programs will receive an annual monitoring (on-site or desk review) to assess fiscal, program and data performance. The state will also include quarterly desk reviews to assess accounting and monitoring systems, budget methodologies, cash management practices, cost allocation plans, purchasing and procurement procedures, internal controls, programs results or outcomes, reporting accuracy, and recordkeeping.

Adult Education is assessed by the federal Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) annually based on a standard of continuous program improvement, as well as a rigorous comparison of performance measures among states. Annual evaluations form the basis of negotiating annual state performance targets with OCTAE. Targets are negotiated annually with U.S. Department of Education based on past performance and comparative performance across states. Periodically OCTAE conducts weeklong site monitoring visits to evaluate State practices, which includes intensive visits to samples of local provider programs. The Adult Education Division conducts program monitoring visits to all local providers every four years, which includes administrative, instructional, fiscal, and data process evaluations. A written report includes recognition of promising practices, recommendations for improvement, and, if necessary, a corrective action plan to be further monitored by the State office. Besides these regular visits, the state office reviews each program's annual single audit prior to awarding funding and places programs on corrective action plans if the audit indicates that is necessary. Desk monitoring of local programs takes place on an on-going basis and, in the case of data and fiscal performance, on a monthly basis at least. An annual risk assessment provides an opportunity to review the performance of each program and rank them risks identified throughout a year of monitoring. This risk assessment is used to determine the schedule of site monitoring visits. Local program effectiveness, quality, and improvement are also taken into account in determining the amount of funding allocated each year to each program.

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, the six primary indicators of performance of the Adult Education Program are:

- Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

It should be noted that the 6th primary indicator of performance, Effectiveness in Serving Employers, is not yet required to be tracked, as per the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) of the U.S. Department of Education.

In fiscal year 2023, the Adult Education program exceeded all of its targets for all of its primary performance indicators. In addition, the Program increased statewide enrollment in Adult Education by 15% and high school equivalency completions by 17%.

The two vocational rehabilitation programs are measured by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), which has established Standards and Indicators, which the agencies must report on to the legislature each year. The Indicators are:

- 1.1 - Number of Case Closures with an Employment Outcome.
- 1.2 - Percentage of Case Closures that Received Services with an Employment Outcome.
- 1.3 - Percentage of Case Closures with a Competitive Employment Outcome. (Note: Competitive Employment also includes self-employment, Business Enterprises Program participation, or supported employment in an integrated setting.)
- 1.4 - Percentage of Case Closures with Significant Disabilities with a Competitive Employment Outcome.
- 1.5 - Ratio of Average Closure Wage to Average State Wage
- 1.6 - Difference between the Percentage of Case Closures with Employment Outcomes that are Self Support at Application versus Self Support at Closure. (Note: Self Support means the individual reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support.)
- 2.1 - Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate.

The VR agencies are required to submit reports to RSA that include data used to track trends of persons applying for VR services, and determinations of eligibility made by the state VR agency. Also, identification of persons with significant disabilities, Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) development, service implementation and program outcomes are key program measurements that provide a general assessment of state VR programs and their accomplishments.

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. This may include choosing to set additional indicators of performance.

Each of the one-stop partners will strive to achieve the locally-negotiated performance standards of quality service for its customers, employees, and partners. Each is committed to meeting or exceeding the various performance measures laid out in their grants or programs. Each partner will work cooperatively with other partners to achieve performance measures of the four core programs.

According to local board MOUs, one-stop partners are committed to the performance indicators of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act placing participants into unsubsidized employment, increasing job retention, removing barriers to employment, providing meaningful education and training activities leading to jobs with self-sufficiency. The partners are equally committed to meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. Customer surveys will be utilized to gauge progress and to gather information for continuous improvement.

Finally, each of the Core Partners has committed to share data to support the Common Unique Identifier. This information is discussed quarterly at a Workforce Partners meeting to identify opportunities, address challenges and discover trends to inform policy and program decision making at a state level.

E&T and/or FNS staff will perform, at a minimum, one annual onsite Management Evaluation (ME) monitoring visit to all E&T providers. In conjunction with the visits, a minimum of two case reviews per representative will be completed by both the provider and E&T staff each month. Case reviewers will review for the assessment, release of information/consent form (if applicable), eligibility verification of SNAP benefits, individual employment plan, participant progress, and participant reimbursements. In addition to the case reviews, monitoring will include a fiscal review of staff time sheets, expenditures of non-federal funds (if necessary) and supporting documentation of participant reimbursements. Upon completion of the ME, the report will be sent to the provider within 60 days of the visit. If there are any findings that need to be addressed, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) will be developed by the provider and submitted to E&T no later than 45 days after the written report issuance. E&T will provide appropriate and necessary training, technical assistance, and ongoing monitoring to assist with rectifying any issues.

The Work and Family Support Bureau (WFSB) staff conducting annual Management Evaluation (ME) reviews of the New Mexico Work Program. The reviews focus on contract compliance with the services and funding related to contract compliance. The ME will consist of meetings with program and fiscal staff, case reviews, program observation and interviews conducted in and a Monitoring and Assessment Report to be completed by Department of Workforce Solutions Leadership staff.

The NMW program is subject to a monthly Disaggregate reporting process (DISAGG). This process is a review process of a random case set (samples) for proper case management practices and documentation. The work participation rate is determined based on the participation of those selected in the sample which are then multiplied by TANF monthly universe in each stratum. Once the sample is downloaded, NMW makes contact with all mandatory clients selected in the sample, inform the client that they have been chosen in the sample, and any and all participation that the client engaged in during the sample month should be documented and submitted within a deadline. All mandatory clients selected in the sample should be contacted within a week of the sample being run.

All supporting documentation is uploaded in the ASPEN database and the corresponding timesheets are completed in WorkPath. A work-eligible participant excludes all child only households and those work eligible participants who have received a conditional exemption from full participation based on a federally approved waiver. In order to count completed work participation hours in the federal work participation rate, the hours must be validated for all cases. The service provider must collaborate with the local ISD field offices and send proof of the completed hours using documentation as described in the state's Work Verification Plan to the federal reporting team in WFSB by the established deadline. Only actual hours of allowed work activity by a TANF participant will count toward WPR. Time spent traveling to and from the activity and to and from the childcare provider does not count as participation hours.

Actual hours of participation for those TANF participants who are employed for wages will be determined by paycheck stubs and will include any paid leave or holidays that the participant is allowed through their employer.

Participation hours for those participants who are in non-paid activities can include excused absences and holidays if the participant was scheduled to be active on that day. The hours of activity the participant was scheduled to participate in will be the maximum hours allowed as

an excused absence or holiday. Component activities can be combined in any variation to ensure that the participants meet their required participation hours except that, due to FLSA requirements, a TANF participant cannot be placed in work experience and community service at the same time. If work participation rate is not met, New Mexico may face penalties imposed by the federal government. The federal work participation rate are fifty (50) percent for All Family and ninety (90) percent for Two-Parent households. Federal guidelines allow states to reduce their participation rates by using the Caseload Reduction Credit. This is a report that WFSB submits annually based on reported excess Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds from both private and public sectors. The work participation rate (WPR) is the percentage of work eligible participants selected in a monthly sample who are meeting the work participation requirements. That percentage is then weighted against the entire monthly TANF caseload, including the child only cases.

HSD will conduct one annual onsite Management Evaluation (ME). The ME consists of interviews with the provider TANF program managers, coordinators, career consultants and clerical support. HSD offices also participate in these annual ME's and their County Directors and TANF LIAISONS are also interviewed. Part of the ME process is to complete observations. These ensure staff on both the providers and HSD side understand the importance of consistency, and communication as part of their job duties in case management.

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.

HSD is required to complete a Management Evaluation (ME) on all programs funded with TANF funds. The ME is to be completed after the conclusion of each state fiscal year. The purpose of these ME is to review the overall administration of the program and to ensure program compliance with the terms and conditions of each General Services Agreement (contract), adherence to the Scope of Work and to evaluate that the service delivery plan has achieved satisfactory performance in relation to both federal and state requirements. During the ME, our staff review the contracted partner's internal policies and procedures, training and development plan, staffing, referrals to other agencies, outcomes, data reporting, observations and fiscal compliance.

Following the ME, our staff gather the information reviewed and compile it into a comprehensive report. Within the report, we categorize our targeted review elements into the following categories: Exception, Finding, Training Issue, Observation or Recommendation. An Exception is an instance of the reviewer discovering any deviation from program requirements. A Finding is a deviation from federal or state requirements, the contract or scope of work and are more of a prevalent problem than an Exception. The training issue is a need for improvement and will require additional training with staff to meet expectations. Observations are issues that do not result in a Finding but could lead to Findings later if not corrected now. Recommendations are our feedback or guidance on elements that should be reviewed and considered for change.

HSD will schedule an exit conference with the program management staff following the ME. During the exit conference will briefly discuss the targeted components that will be mentioned in the comprehensive report. The comprehensive report and supporting documents are then released to the point of contact for the contracted partner along with a request for a formal response (Corrective Action Plan) that describes the efforts and initiatives to improve the elements identified as needing action during the ME. HSD will review the submitted Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and will either accept the response or will ask for a modification. HSD will also identify a satisfactory period for the contractor to implement their efforts and HSD will re-evaluate these efforts with a smaller scale ME to determine if the CAP has satisfied the elements that required action. Results of this annual ME are provided to the contractor, the HSD Cabinet Secretary (or designee), the ISD Deputy Directors, the HSD Compliance and Administrative Bureau Chief and the WIOA Coordinator.

Outside of the annual ME, monthly case reviews, mini desk reviews and observations are done. This is to identify any error trends, any areas that may require improvement or targeted training and to ensure that policies and procedures are being followed. Elements requiring attention are immediately shared with the contractor. HSD reserves the right to review program compliance at any time.

All financial documents are reviewed and processed by the assigned HSD Contract Manager. After the Contract Manager completes the financial task, a request is sent to the ISD Budget Bureau Chief for a second level review of the task to ensure all fiscal requirements are met prior to finalization.

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)).

Evaluations of activities performed under the WIOA titles I and III core programs will be conducted as required by 20 CFR 682.220. The Economic Research and Analysis Bureau (ER&A) of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions will be the lead for facilitating and organizing the analysis. The subject matter of evaluation is discussed and determined by the State Workforce Board, and a timeline and a description of the evaluation's methodology is prepared and presented for review and consideration. Evaluations of customer satisfaction and employer needs are conducted annually, as required by the State WIOA Plan, and the results are shared with the State and local boards. ER&A staff will develop a statistical adjustment model to enable the Governor, the local boards, and chief elected officials, to adjust the local performance accountability measures for the expected economic conditions and the expected characteristics of participants to be served in the local area. Sound statistical and econometric methods will be adhered to, as appropriate.

SNAP E&T has created a participant survey to gather information using relevant questions for E&T participants with the aim of understanding their program comprehension and experience.

This Survey will be used as an educational and training source, to make improvements to the programs offered to New Mexicans across the state.

HSD completes an annual Management Evaluation, which is a full review of the overall administration of the program. This consists of an in-depth review of the policies and procedures that program staff operate under in alignment with the Scope of Work, expenditures in comparison to the budget and a review of a random sample of cases to ensure all applicable federal and state policies are being followed. In addition to monthly case reviews, HSD does monthly desk audits on cases to determine if there are areas for improvement or training opportunities along with a review of inbound calls from customers to the NM Works line within the HSD Consolidated Customer Service Center.

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)

PROCEDURE MANUAL: WIOA Fiscal Section

SUBJECT: Determination of Annual WIOA Allotments to Local Areas for New Program Year

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2023

1.0 SCOPE

DWS is the statewide administrative entity charged with oversight of federal funds which flow through to local boards for payment of federal dollars under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2.0 ASSOCIATED MATERIALS

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

3.0 PROCEDURES:

Each year, DWS WIOA Fiscal Section will calculate Local Area's formula distribution of WIOA funds using the following procedures:

- Staff will review U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Training & Employment Guidance Letter used by USDOL to provide States with Program Year and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) annual allotments. The TEGl provides the PY and FY distributions by funding stream: Adult and Dislocated Worker and the PY allotment for Youth.
- Staff will develop New Mexico's preliminary WIOA allotment from the TEGl. Compare to prior year's allotment to determine overall funding increases or decreases in funding. Calculate state reservation of funds (5% State Administration, 10% Statewide

Activities, and 15% State Rapid Response) to arrive at amount of funds available for distribution to local areas including the Navajo Nation.

- Staff will obtain LMI data from DWS ER&A and enter into a spreadsheet that calculates the fair share allocation utilizing the 6-part formula for Dislocated Worker and the 3-Part Formulas for Adult and Youth. This spreadsheet is designed to calculate the following local area funding stream allocations:

Youth Funding

Staff will use the spreadsheet for the Three-Part Formula to determine each Local Areas allocation using the relative share of the following three data categories in accordance with the TEGl:

1. Number of Economically Disadvantaged, Youth (Ages 16-21)
2. Average Number of Excess Unemployed for the 12-month period.
3. Average Number of Substantial Unemployed for 12-month period.

Raw data will be used to develop three-part formula Indexes of Need, and funds will be distributed in fair share allocation (33 1/3% to each part) based on Index of Need for each part.

Spreadsheets break out calculations by:

- Fair Share Allocation (by County within Local Area) of State Set asides (5% and 10%).
- Fair Share Allocation (by County within Local Area) of Administrative Dollars
- Fair Share Allocation (by County within Local Area) of Program Dollars

Spreadsheets reflect calculations by:

- Program Year Fair Share Local Area Allocation by County within Local Area and by program and Administrative funds.
- Fiscal Year Fair Share Local Area Allocation by County within Local Area and by program and administrative funds.

Note: Navajo Nation is a Local Area for the purpose of fair share allocation based on raw data.

Using a spreadsheet designed to calculate the 90% Hold Harmless amounts, staff will enter the prior two years' Actual Local Area Allocations to arrive at the 2-year average allocation for each area. Staff will multiply the 2-year average by 90% to arrive at the 90% amount of the prior 2-year average. This is the minimum amount of funding that local areas should receive if the 90% hold harmless amounts are used as a minimum allocation amount. This spreadsheet will calculate the ratable increases and decreases and adjust the final allocation accordingly.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ASSIGNED PERSONNEL TO ADHERE TO THIS PROCEDURE UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

PROCEDURE MANUAL: WIOA Fiscal Section

SUBJECT: Determination of Annual WIOA Allotments to Local Areas for New Program Year

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2023

1.0 SCOPE

DWS is the statewide administrative entity charged with oversight of federal funds which flow through to local boards for payment of federal dollars under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2.0 ASSOCIATED MATERIALS

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

3.0 PROCEDURES:

Each year, DWS WIOA Fiscal Section will calculate Local Area's formula distribution of WIOA funds using the following procedures:

- Staff will review U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Training & Employment Guidance Letter used by USDOL to provide States with Program Year and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) annual allotments. The TEGl provides the PY and FY distributions by funding stream: Adult and Dislocated Worker and the PY allotment for Youth.
- Staff will develop New Mexico's preliminary WIOA allotment from the TEGl. Compare to prior year's allotment to determine overall funding increases or decreases in funding. Calculate state reservation of funds (5% State Administration, 10% Statewide Activities, and 15% State Rapid Response) to arrive at amount of funds available for distribution to local areas including the Navajo Nation.
- Staff will obtain LMI data from DWS ER&A and enter into a spreadsheet that calculates the fair share allocation utilizing the 6-part formula for Dislocated Worker and the 3-Part Formulas for Adult and Youth. This spreadsheet is designed to calculate the following local area funding stream allocations.

Adult Funding

Staff will use the spreadsheet for the Three-Part Formula to determine each Local Areas allocation using the relative share of the following three data categories in accordance with the TEGl:

1. Number of Economically Disadvantaged (2020 Census) Adults (Ages 22-72)
2. Number of Excess Unemployed
3. Number of Substantial Unemployed

Raw data will be used to develop three-part formula Indexes of Need, and funds will be distributed in fair share allocation (33 1/3% to each part) based on Index of Need for each part.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ASSIGNED PERSONNEL TO ADHERE TO THIS PROCEDURE UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

PROCEDURE MANUAL: WIOA Fiscal Section

SUBJECT: Determination of Annual WIOA Allotments to Local Areas for New Program Year

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2023

1.0 SCOPE

DWS is the statewide administrative entity charged with oversight of federal funds which flow through to local boards for payment of federal dollars under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2.0 ASSOCIATED MATERIALS

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

3.0 PROCEDURES:

Each year, DWS WIOA Fiscal Section will calculate Local Area's formula distribution of WIOA funds using the following procedures:

- Staff will review U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Training & Employment Guidance Letter used by USDOL to provide States with Program Year and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) annual allotments. The TEGL provides the PY and FY distributions by funding stream: Adult and Dislocated Worker and the PY allotment for Youth.
- Staff will develop New Mexico's preliminary WIOA allotment from the TEGL. Compare to prior year's allotment to determine overall funding increases or decreases in funding. Calculate state reservation of funds (5% State Administration, 10% Statewide Activities, and 15% State Rapid Response) to arrive at amount of funds available for distribution to local areas including the Navajo Nation.
- Staff will obtain LMI data from DWS ER&A and enter into a spreadsheet that calculates the fair share allocation utilizing the 6-part formula for Dislocated Worker and the 3-Part Formulas for Adult and Youth. This spreadsheet is designed to calculate the following local area funding stream allocations.

Dislocated Worker Funding:

Staff will use the spreadsheet for the Six-Part Formula to determine each Local Areas allocation using the relative share of the following six data categories in accordance with the TEGL:

1. Insured Unemployed
2. Unemployed Concentrations

3. Plant Closing and Mass Layoff
4. Declining Industry
5. Farmer/Rancher Economic Hardship
6. Long Term Unemployed

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ASSIGNED PERSONNEL TO ADHERE TO THIS PROCEDURE UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

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 AEFLA, 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.

Competitive Process: The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) is the State's eligible agency for administering Adult Education and Literacy programs under WIOA. The Adult Education Division oversees this effort. NMHED is required to award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers within the state to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within the State. Eligible providers must use AEFLA funds to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide these concurrently. The competition must ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for AEFLA funds and that the same grant or contract announcement or application process are used for all eligible providers. NMHED uses a Request for Applications (RFA) process that follows both state procurement rules and federal guidelines under WIOA. At present, NMHED is in the middle of a 4-year grant cycle that began on July 1, 2021, with 26 awards issued to local providers in all four workforce regions. The RFA process for the next multi-year grant cycle is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2025 for funding to begin July 1, 2025. Any announcement will be contingent upon State Plan approval by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. If such approval is granted, the anticipated competition timeline is:

- January 2025: NMHED issues a statewide, public Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) and a formal Request for Applications (RFA).
- February 2025: NMHED provides a technical assistance conference and assembles its review panel.

- March 2025: Grant applications are due by date specified in the application.
- April 2025: Applications are sent to local workforce development boards for review. Reviewers read and score AEFLA grant applications.
- May 2025: NMHED announces grant proposals approved to receive funding. NMHED also holds negotiation conferences with grant recipients.
- June 2025: Final grant award notification (GAN) letters are sent to grant recipients.

It is important to note that the NOFA and RFP will be advertised statewide and sent to all known eligible service providers, covering all funding categories and programs available for current year distribution. Both will be sent to all requesting parties. All eligible recipients for AEFLA Section 225, 231, and/or 243 funds will be allowed the same opportunity to apply for funds regardless of the priorities they address and they will follow the same RFA process. While the nature of the NOFA and RFA process will be identical, funding set aside for both Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals will be addressed and distributed via a separate RFA process with program-specific content and criteria for evaluation that conform to WIOA requirements for Section 225 and Section 243 programs.

Applicant Eligibility: Federal regulations governing AEFLA (34 CFR, 463) clarify that only an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services may apply for AEFLA funds. AEFLA lists 10 organization types that may be eligible providers and further permits other organization types to apply. These include:

1. A local educational agency
2. A community-based organization or faith-based organization
3. A volunteer literacy organization
4. An institution of higher education
5. A public or private nonprofit agency
6. A library
7. A public housing authority
8. A nonprofit institution that is not described (A)-(G)
 1. A consortium or coalition of entities listed in (A)-(H)
10. A partnership between an employer and an entity listed in (A)-(H)

NMHED is responsible for determining if an application is from an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. In its AEFLA RFA, NMHED will specify the process for an applicant to follow when submitting data on demonstrated effectiveness.

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.

Demonstrated Effectiveness: The CFR regulation named above addresses how an applicant establishes that it has demonstrated effectiveness, defined as the applicant's "record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains for reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds." An applicant must provide objective performance data to reflect this, as well as to demonstrate a history of "outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training." There are two ways an eligible provider might meet the demonstrated effectiveness portion of the eligibility requirement, depending on whether or not the applicant has been funded under AEFLA in the past. If an applicant has previously received an AEFLA grant, then it will specifically be required to submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. If an applicant has not previously received an AEFLA grant as amended by WIOA, the applicant must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals and include evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in 34 CFR 463.24, Subpart C. The regulation establishes uniformity for determining demonstrated effectiveness and ensures that potential providers who have not received AEFLA funding in the past have an opportunity to compete for these funds. They also leave the State and its eligible agency, in this case NMHED, some flexibility. While NMHED cannot add any new criteria or data to the definition of demonstrated effectiveness set in regulation, it can determine both the number of years of data it will require and, importantly, the efficacy threshold on which it will screen applications.

Determining Demonstrated Effectiveness and Applicant Eligibility: NMHED must certify that each applicant meets both tiers of the eligibility requirement discussed above, including the demonstrated effectiveness requirement. To meet this obligation, the same grant announcement and RFA process will be used. This single process will contain two distinct phases of screening, with the first phase limited to pure eligibility screening and yielding simply a "yes" or "no" answer. To demonstrate effectiveness, eligible providers will provide NMHED with at least two years of performance data reflecting outcomes. The set threshold of demonstrated effectiveness that NMHED will use to ascertain that a provider may be considered for funding will be included in the RFA. Application materials will transparently address both aspects of applicant eligibility, including a clear outline of the method NMHED requests applicants use for supplying required data on demonstrated effectiveness and how NMHED intends to evaluate the data. Care will be taken to ensure the applicant understands the difference between the demonstrated effectiveness component of the initial eligibility screening process, and the "past effectiveness" consideration used to evaluate proposals that have earned a "yes" in the eligibility screening phase. Once NMHED completes the eligibility screening process, only those applications that pass this initial review process will advance to the competitive phase of the application and proposal review process.

General Proposal Requirements: All proposals must be submitted by the deadline listed in the RFA. Each applicant shall apply for the grant according to the instructions contained in the RFA. Any application not including all the information and assurances required will be deemed non-responsive and rejected. NMHED will forward all responsive applications to the local workforce board in the region(s) from which they applied for review and comment on their alignment with

the regional WIOA plan. These reviews will be taken into consideration during proposal evaluation and final scoring.

AEFLA grant applicants should expect the RFAs to require information in the following general categories:

- Performance data sufficient to determine eligibility, including demonstrated effectiveness.
- Financial states sufficient to show solvency and sound fiscal management.
- A description of how funds awarded under AEFLA would be spent.
- A description of how the applicant would meet the State adjusted levels of AEFLA-specific performance, including how the applicant would collect data to report on such performance indicators.
- A description of how the applicant would provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals.
- A description of any cooperative or co-enrollment arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of sanctioned Adult Education and Literacy activities; and
- A description of how the applicant would provide services in alignment with the Combined State and Local Plans, including how the applicant would promote concurrent enrollment with core WIOA partners and how the applicant will fulfill One Stop partner responsibilities outlined by WIOA.

Assurances must be provided that all funds awarded under AEFLA will be used to provide, establish, or operate programs that provide instruction and services corresponding to allowable AEFLA activities listed, defined in Section 203 of WIOA. These activities are listed below. The first two listed (Adult Education and Literacy) are required activities; the remaining six are allowable AEFLA activities.

1. **Adult Education:** Academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that include an individual's ability to read, write, and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment.
2. **Literacy:** The ability to read, write, and speak in English and to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society.
3. **Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities:** Adult Education and literacy activities in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.
4. **Family Literacy Activities:** Activities of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family that better enable

parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:

1. Parent or family Adult Education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency;
2. Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children;
3. Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and
4. Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

NOTE: As previously indicated, no funds under an AEFLA grant may be used 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 in the case of family literacy programs. In providing family literacy activities under AEFLA, 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.

5. **English Language Acquisition Activities:** A program of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language and that leads to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent and transition to postsecondary education and training or employment.
6. **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education:** Educational services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enable them to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training.

NOTE: As previously indicated, Section 243 (IELCE) funding and Section 225 (Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals) will be awarded under a separate RFA following the same process as and simultaneous with the Adult Education and English Language Acquisition RFA. WIOA legislation and OCTAE have separate requirements for providers who submit applications under Sections 243 and Section 225.

7. **Workforce Preparation Activities:** Activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and

obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.

8. **Integrated Education and Training:** A service approach that provides Adult Education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. This includes offering courses in collaboration with postsecondary institutions, employers, or trade associations that are team-taught by an Adult Education basic skills instructor and a Career and Technical Education instructor.

Proposal Evaluation and Considerations for Funding: A review team selected by NMHED based on published criteria will evaluate all potential service provider applications. Each evaluator will complete an evaluation form for each applicant. While the names of each evaluator will be kept confidential, the scores assigned to each application by each evaluator will be retained and available for public review upon request. In addition to the General Application Requirements already outlined, within the narrative portion of the application, proposers will be required to explain how they will meet each of the 13 required considerations outlined in Section 231(e) of WIOA. Grouped into overarching categories, these considerations include the need for each applicant to demonstrate effectiveness, need for service, program accessibility, program quality, alignment and coordination, relevance, and capacity for administration and compliance. The full text for all 13 considerations NMHED is required to evaluate is provided below:

1. The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to (A) the regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners.
2. The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities.
3. Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.
4. The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners.
5. Whether the eligible provider's program (A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and (B) uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.
6. Whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research

available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice.

7. Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.
8. Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means.
10. Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways;
11. Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as childcare, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;
12. Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and
13. Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

NMHED must include at least these 13 considerations when evaluating proposal applications, though it may decide how to weigh each consideration. If NMHED includes additional considerations for evaluating applicant proposals, they will be clearly defined in the RFA application and marked as "STATE" considerations or requirements. As is customary, to demonstrate that the 13 considerations listed above were considered in the competitive process, NMHED will score and weight these (and all other) considerations according to a published rubric as part of the application evaluation process. One of the 13 required considerations addresses past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals with low levels of literacy. To be clear, rating an application with respect to this "past effectiveness" consideration is not an allowable substitution for NMHED when

conducting applicant eligibility screening. The determination of applicant eligibility, including demonstrated effectiveness, must come first since it is required to be separate and distinct from rating "past effectiveness" as one of the 13 evaluation considerations described above. This means that it would be entirely possible for an applicant to pass the initial round of eligibility screening, to advance to the evaluation and rating phase of the competition and score very low on the past effectiveness consideration. Depending on how NMHED chooses to weigh this consideration, it would be possible for the applicant in this example to be deemed ultimately non-competitive.

Distribution of Funding: Applicants selected to receive AEFLA grants will be informed in writing. Prior to receiving awards, selected applicants will be required to engage in a final negotiation process with NMHED. Areas subject to negotiation include the final approved budget(s). The negotiation process may include changes in final funding amounts or to line items to bring said budgets into compliance with federal and state regulations and/or fund availability. The final negotiation process may also include additional areas that might require technical assistance or clarification, such as professional development plans. NMHED will work with accepted applicants to schedule this negotiation process and to provide any needed technical assistance. A final, written grant agreement will be sent to each awarded provider. Once this agreement is signed, it - along with the eligible provider's original application - will constitute the grant agreement.

The amount of funding available in each program year to each eligible provider awarded an AEFLA grant will be determined by available state and federal funds and distributed equitably according to a published funding formula. This formula is determined by NMHED in consultation with Adult Education program directors and financial officers from eligible provider institutions and organizations. It is formally reviewed at least once every four (4) years. The last review began in 2021 and concluded in spring of 2022. The next review and potential revision must begin in 2025 and conclude by spring of 2026, though it may begin earlier than this in response to challenges inherent in the current funding formula that were not perceived when it was established in 2022. At minimum, this funding formula will take into account the number of participants served and performance on core indicators under WIOA. Provisions to incentivize performance or service population targets may be also be included in the funding formula.

NMHED will ensure direct and equitable access to all applicants by using the NOFA grant announcement and RFA application procedure described earlier in this section. Public notice of the NOFA and RFA will be issued through multiple venues. At minimum, the NOFA plus instructions for receiving a written copy of the RFA will be published in the Albuquerque Journal, a newspaper with statewide circulation. The NOFA and RFA will also be published on the NMHED website. Copies of both will be mailed directly to all existing local adult education service providers, as well as to all who request it. Should additional funding become available in the middle of a grant cycle (as in the case of the withdrawal of a provider during the term of a grant), the same process will be used to provide services in the applicable service area and will be open to all eligible agencies throughout the state. All eligible applicants for Sections 225, 231, and 243 of WIOA will submit applications via the same application process directly to NMHED, the eligible agency. They will not be required to apply through another agency or agencies in a multi-tiered process. The application process is designed so that direct application to NMHED is evident and nonnegotiable. Direct application for the grant is the norm. This ensures that all

applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria. It also ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and review process is used for all eligible providers. Prior to the application deadline, any eligible agency that contacts NMHED with an interest in participating will be provided the information requested. Prior to the application deadline, NMHED will conduct a technical assistance webinar for potential applicants. An invitation to attend any prescheduled conference is attached to the NOFA and RFA, or published in conjunction with it. Serving as the program officer, the State Adult Education Director will respond in writing to individual questions before and after this conference; all questions and responses are published on the NMHED website. These approaches meet or exceed all requirements specified in AEFLA and in the State's procurement policies.

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.

NMCB is designated as the state agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation services portion of the Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals in New Mexico who are blind. NMCB receives 18.5% of the vocational rehabilitation grant awarded to the State of New Mexico, and NMDVR receives 81.5 percent of the award.

NMCB was created in 1986, and the 18.5% distribution was based on the funds that were actually being spent by NMDVR to provide vocational rehabilitation services to blind persons. The distribution was based on prior year actuals, and it also included consideration of the organizational structure of NMCB. NMCB has a residential training center, and the 18.5% was a distribution that was in the middle of the range for blind agencies that included a residential training center in their organizational structure. This distribution is consistent with the greater costs of providing vocational rehabilitation services to persons who are blind or visually impaired, and it falls within the average range of what is typically found for blind and general agencies in other states.

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.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

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

NMDWS has established a standardized agreement process for external entities seeking to meet WIOA compliance. NMDWS strongly encourages program providers to utilize the Workforce Connection Online System to support case management where appropriate. NMDWS adjusts the system configuration to accommodate this expanded use and provides direct user access for these entities to serve their participants. For entities that have established case management systems, NMDWS provides a mechanism to request and receive wage data electronically within the constraint of existing rules and regulations.

NMDWS has modified the base data set available within the system to produce the Eligible Training Provider List more effectively. NMDWS has expanded its relationships with several educational institutions to create a tie to educational program data and enable these institutions to perform the necessary advanced analytics to determine more advanced program outcome tracking.

NMDWS has worked with several state agencies to standardize eligibility verification as it relates to employment or wage confirmation. The Department is working directly with the State's Human Services Department to establish an integrated workforce system that will provide for real time secured data sharing for both internal staff program support and individual participant servicing.

While recognizing the need for appropriate privacy safeguards, data sharing has been established among the partner agencies to enable more efficient use of all resources being applied to the benefit of each customer. NMDWS and the State Workforce Development Board continue to coordinate agreements with its partner agencies to establish a more integrated system and accounting process to enable tracking of services provided to all individuals receiving career services so that actual performance outcomes can be correlated to the investments being made in this area. These efforts allow the State Board to determine where opportunities for improvement exist and identify which practices and programs are yielding the best outcomes. The existing agreements have been refined and implemented in order to facilitate this activity while maintaining compliance with existing regulations established to safeguard the privacy of the individual customer. Unfortunately, New Mexico is not a recipient of key federal funding used to support the longitudinal database. Although there is a strong desire to integrate functions across systems, including a comprehensive case management system across the core programs, there are limitations. Aside from residing in different state agencies, each of the core programs are also required to adhere to federal reporting requirements that do not all align. Local workforce development boards worked tirelessly over the last four years to address the potential of a common data base, common case management system and referral system, but were limited due to several challenges associated with limited funding and capacity. To date, core programs are committed to working closely together to assure consistent referral strategies that enhance care coordination and reduce duplication of efforts on behalf of job seekers and businesses at the local level. New Mexico's infrastructure and data systems may not be integrated; however, commitment is high. The Higher Education Department recently submitted a grant application to fund a longitudinal data system that has

been awarded. The longitudinal data system is being developed. Additionally, NMDWS will continue to research for available funding.

LOCAL LEVEL EFFORTS. Local board grant agreements require the local boards to continue to seek strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, and workers and jobseekers through the following:

- facilitating connections among the intake and case management information systems of the one-stop partner programs to support a comprehensive workforce development system in the local area;
- facilitating access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including access in remote areas;
- identifying strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery, and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills; and
- leveraging resources and capacity within the local workforce development system, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment.

WIOA identifies the one-stop system as the service delivery system for programs funded under the Act and its partner programs. Workforce Connection Centers have been designated as New Mexico's one-stop delivery system. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be developed with the agreement of the chief elected officials of the local workforce development region and entered into between the local board areas and the workforce system partners in the Workforce Connection Centers, to establish a process to govern and maintain the operation of each of the comprehensive and affiliate workforce connection center.

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

NMDWS has established a standardized agreement process for external entities seeking to meet WIOA compliance. NMDWS strongly encourages program providers to utilize the Workforce Connection Online System to support case management where appropriate. NMDWS adjusts the system configuration to accommodate this expanded use and provides direct user access for these entities to serve their participants. For entities that have established case management systems, NMDWS provides a mechanism to request and receive wage data electronically within the constraint of existing rules and regulations.

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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

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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)).

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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.

NMDWS convenes the core programs and core partner agencies monthly to review and analyze the workforce development system. Discussions center on progress of partnership at local level, integration of services, co-location and outcomes for job seekers who receive services. NMDWS implemented a Common Unique Identifier process to track customers across the core programs. This data provides an insight into the number of individuals and type of services received. The information also sheds light about impact regionally, demonstrating locations that are more likely to serve job seekers with more than one program. Using employment data, the core programs and partner agencies are able to pinpoint success and/or gaps that require additional resource and attention.

Core program and partner agencies are also using the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting, entering, persisting in, and completing post secondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. This may include choosing to set additional indicators of performance. Each of the core programs and combined partners strive to achieve the locally negotiated performance standards of quality service for its customers, employees, and partners. Each is committed to meeting or exceeding the various performance measures laid out in their grants or programs. Each work cooperatively at the state and local level to share information about expected performance, gaps and opportunities for improvement. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) also enter into MOUs with each of their partners and have regularly scheduled partner meetings to review implementation. The MOUs include required performance indicators of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. At the local level LWDBs and their partners are focused on tracking outcomes related to placing participants into unsubsidized employment, increasing job retention, removing barriers to employment, providing meaningful education and training activities leading to jobs with self-sufficiency.

Together they share a commitment to meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers and are engaged in design, planning and implementation to assure quality. Customer and business surveys are implemented and shared across the system to gauge progress and to gather recommendations for continuous improvement.

NMLDS combines academic and workforce data from ten interdepartmental source systems to derive meaning and insights that will inform and guide decision-makers as they seek to better serve New Mexicans. Current data ingested into and reported through NMLDS includes information such as student demographics, enrollment, dual-credit status, remediation status, educational program participation, financial aid, educational interventions, teacher preparation and certification/licensure, and information on employment including industry, earnings, and participation in workforce training initiatives. Linking these data points allows state leaders, state and local education agencies, policymakers, early childhood practitioners, educators, workforce developers, external researchers, the public, and other stakeholders to make informed, data-driven policy, practice, and funding decisions. Ultimately, these decisions will drive improvements in New Mexicans' educational and economic outcomes. NMLDS links P-20W data originating from ten source systems owned by ECECD, PED, HED, DWS, and DVR.

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.)

NMDWS staff leverages the Workforce Connection Online system as data consolidation point for access to quarterly unemployment insurance (UI) wage records from the UI data base for participants that exit following receipt of services. This wage data is uploaded to the Workforce Connection Online System to meet federal reporting requirements. The Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) and Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES) are used to obtain wages received from outside the state of New Mexico. This wage data is also uploaded into the Workforce Connection Online system and is used to calculate performance outcomes.

Access to wage records has been an important issue for many years and is an even greater priority under WIOA. Use of wage records for WIOA core program performance and eligible training provider performance reporting purposes, and disclosure of wage records for certain federal evaluations are mandatory under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)(4)). State workforce, training, and education programs are required to use quarterly wage records to measure the progress of the State on the State and local performance accountability measures, and for obtaining the information required in the Eligible Training Provider List (WIOA Sections 116(i) and 121(d)). Quarterly wage records are the employer-provided wage reports collected under authority in Section 1137 of the SSA (42 USC 1320b-7). These are the reports state UI agencies obtain for UI tax liability and benefit eligibility determination purposes, and also use to detect improper payments. Confidentiality and disclosure of wage records are governed by the regulations at 20 CFR Part 603.

Like other state UI agencies, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions coordinates disclosure of wage records for the mandated purposes for the state to be in compliance with

WIOA requirements. To facilitate access to wage records for these purposes, DOL (ETA, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Chief Evaluation Office) is undertaking a number of activities in partnership with other Federal agencies to enable efficient and secure access to confidential wage data as envisioned under WIOA. As such, New Mexico awaits additional guidance and extensive technical assistance in this area from U.S. DOL, which expects to issue specific guidance about wage record access issues in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, including issues related to cross matching wage records with educational data, which is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. §1232g.

Wage information, defined in 20 CFR Part 603.2(k), includes the three data categories or elements that states must use for WIOA performance reporting purposes: wages, Social Security Number(s), and employer information. Federal regulations at 20 CFR Part 603.5(e) permit states to disclose confidential unemployment compensation (UC) information “to a public official for use in the performance of his or her official duties.” Performance of official duties means “administration or enforcement of law or the execution of the official responsibilities of a Federal, State, or local elected official.” Generally, under these regulations, disclosures of confidential UC information that WIOA requires are already permissible. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions will work collaboratively with one-stop partners to meet the requirements for use of wage records under WIOA.

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.

LWDB annual grant agreements require the boards to comply with the terms and conditions set forth in the Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act (CMPPA) Agreement, which is part of the Information Exchange Agreement (IEA) between the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. The boards cannot duplicate, disseminate, or disclose such data without first obtaining through NMDWS, or SSA’s prior written approval. The boards understand that access, use, or disclosure of social security data in a manner or purpose not authorized by the CMPPA may be subject to civil and criminal sanctions pursuant to applicable federal statutes. Information technology resources must not be used to reveal confidential or sensitive information, client data, or any other information covered by existing state or federal privacy or confidentiality laws, regulations, rules, policies, procedures, or contract terms. Users who engage in the unauthorized release of confidential information via the state’s information technology resources, including but not limited to newsgroups or chat rooms, will be subject to sanctions in existing policies and procedures associated with unauthorized release of such information. Sensitive or confidential data passing over an external network connection must be encrypted to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS.

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.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR
VETERANS.

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.

The State intends to provide employment, training and job placement services for veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG in accordance with the Priority of Service for covered persons (20 CFR Part 1010, Final Rule) and VPLs 03-14, 03-14 Ch. 1 & 2, 03-19, or current guidance. Covered persons receive priority of service for qualified job training program or service for workforce preparation, development, or delivery that is directly funded (in whole or in part) by the Department of Labor. Qualified job training programs consists of universal access, discretionary targeting, and statutory targeting. Veterans and eligible persons will be assessed upon entry to determine if they meet the requirements to be served under JVSG and have one or more significant barriers to employment (SBE). If so, they will be immediately referred to the DVOP or next available AJC staff person. If no SBEs are determined, or they do not meet the eligibility requirements to be seen by a DVOP, per Priority of Service requirements, they will be referred to the next available AJC staff person. SBE veterans/eligible persons will then be provided individualized career services to help overcome their barriers, to include being placed into case management when appropriate.

The DVOP/AJC staff will make referrals to partner programs for additional assistance needed and any training opportunities that the veteran/eligible person has identified as having an interest in. Eligible persons are provided employment services that include assistance in completing universal access registration, attendance to the workforce center orientation and assessments to determine their employment or training needs. All qualified job training programs will have policy or policies in place to ensure covered persons are identified at the point of entry and given the opportunity to take full advantage of priority of service, their entitlement of priority of service, the full array of employment, training, and placement services available under priority of service and/or services, and any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services. Veterans and eligible persons with SBE that are referred to DVOP specialist will have their Objective Assessment Summary (OAS) and Individual Employment Plan (IEP) completed in the Workforce Connection Online System (WCOS). DVOP specialist will assign veterans and eligible persons for participation in career planning, provide them individualized career services and conduct follow-up meeting on a bi-weekly basis for a preferred successful employment or training outcome is achieved. When the veteran/eligible person is found to be job ready, the DVOP/AJC staff will work with the LVER and BSTs to identify employment opportunities that match the veteran's/eligible person's skill set and make the appropriate referral to the employer(s).

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.) regarding 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.

The annual LWDB grant agreements require local boards to assure and certify full compliance of WIOA and all other applicable laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Local board MOUs with one-stop partners also specify parties to the MOU assure that Workforce Connection Center facilities are both programmatically and architecturally accessible; programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities; and methods exist by which costs will be handled for reasonable accommodations.

New Mexico envisions a workforce development system with Workforce Connection Centers, programs, and services that are accessible for all customers, and fully compliant with accessibility requirements for individuals with disabilities, as follows.

- - *Workforce Connection Centers will reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the centers.* This means local boards must ensure Workforce Connection Center staff are sensitive to the needs of individuals with disabilities and be prepared to provide necessary accommodations. These staff should be trained and equipped with the knowledge of accommodation policies, procedures and resources, skills in serving special populations, and motivation to provide superior service to customers with disabilities
 - *Workforce Connection Centers must reflect innovative and effective service design to ensure meaningful access to all customers.* Local boards should ensure one-stop centers are physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. In so doing, one-stop centers should use principles of universal design and human-centered design, such as:
- - considering flexibility in space usage; ensuring physical building access;
 - using pictorial, written, verbal, and tactile modes to present information to customers with disabilities or limited English proficiency;
 - providing clear lines of sight to information for seated or standing users; o providing computer station accessibility;
 - providing adaptive technologies, such as accessible computer software;
 - supporting and sustaining availability of customer information and service access through the Internet; and

- providing adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistants.

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- *Workforce Connection Centers must be assessed for physical and programmatic accessibility.* Local boards must evaluate accessibility of Workforce Connection Centers to ensure the aforementioned accessibility categories are in place, and that front-line staff members are trained to adequately assist individuals with disabilities, and trained in the use of assistive technologies, to ensure the centers meet or surpass federal, state, and local accessibility standards. Local boards should also explore ways through the sharing of best practices to promote and develop employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities, including the provision of career guidance and placement services.
- *Workforce Connection Centers must adhere to federal and state privacy laws in serving customers.* In the sharing of information within and among Workforce Connection Centers and among partner programs, such as for referrals, local boards must ensure Workforce Connection Center staff properly secure customer information in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines, and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary memoranda of understanding or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements, consistent with federal and state privacy laws and regulations. Data should only be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, only after an informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.
- *Workforce Connection Centers must commit to continuous improvement in service delivery.* Local boards should ensure Workforce Connection Centers develop and maintain policies and procedures to evaluate effectiveness of accessibility and overall customer satisfaction, as well as for making improvements based on data and feedback, such as customer accommodation requests.
- *Workforce Connection Centers must leverage relationships with other programs to more effectively serve customers with barriers.* This means local boards must develop collaborative relationships with agencies and programs that have customers facing economic challenges, culture differences, language difficulties, stigmas, and disabilities to support long-range planning and design of universally accessible services. This also includes working with local partner agencies and organizations who also serve individuals with disabilities in the community to coordinate outreach efforts, and to more effectively provide supportive services, such as transportation services and health and human resources.
- *Workforce Connection Centers should explore opportunities to expand capacity for serving customers with barriers.* The State and local boards can work to support and expand the capacity of existing workforce center services to better serve individuals with disabilities and other barriers through staff development, translation services, special equipment, and other accommodations.

One-Stop Certification Policy

New Mexico has developed criteria for one-stop certification that embodies the WIOA vision overall and provides a clear framework for consistency of service delivery state-wide. In accordance with Section 121(g) of WIOA, Local Workforce Development Boards must certify the Workforce Connection Centers every three years. The certification process is important to setting a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in Workforce Connection Centers across the state. The certification criteria allow states to set standard expectations for customer-focused seamless services from a network of employment, training, and related services that help individuals overcome barriers to becoming and staying employed.

A One-Stop Certification policy, process, and resource tool was issued by NMDWS, as the State Administrative Entity for the administration of WIOA, to the Local Workforce Development Boards on January 1, 2017. Local boards are required to certify their Workforce Connection Centers and delivery systems once every three years. The One-Stop Certification policy was approved by the State Workforce Development Board in an open meeting on May 18, 2017. Certification criteria for the tool addressed the areas of effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility and continuous quality improvement. Local boards were encouraged to have a tiered approach in order to give them the time to fully engage their partners in setting up an integrated, customer focused program center. Additionally, a self-assessment was required as part of the certification process so each local board could fully map system services and resources and identify areas where corrective actions and continuous improvement need to be made.

The goal for the 2017 certification process was a baseline minimum certification of the comprehensive Workforce Connection Center and affiliate sites requiring co-location of required partners, a signed umbrella memorandum of understanding and universal access for individuals with disabilities. Certification criteria also requires an ongoing, continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system by requiring the Workforce Connection Center to collect, analyze and use multiple data resources to support improvement. This will be accomplished through meeting or exceeding negotiated levels of performance, along with providing professional development opportunities to the staff.

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.

New Mexico is a bilingual state by law. Our state constitution recognizes Spanish as an official language and as such, access to bi-literate staff is common. NMDWS provides guidance, tools and resources to assure the Workforce Connection Centers can meet the needs of English Language Learners in the following ways.

Bilingual staff in the Workforce Connection Centers is involved in providing all services offered in the centers, including assisting non-English speakers during job fairs, with interviewing, and employer engagement. Most of these staff are Spanish-English bilingual, and some staff are also Navajo-English bilingual. Local boards continue to recruit and hire bilingual staff across the state.

- Access to the Workforce Connection On-Line System include a Spanish option, and documents, tools and resources for Unemployment are available in a variety of languages.
- Every Workforce Connection Center has access to translation services via phone interpretation services. Training is made available to NMDWS staff, LWDBs and partner agencies on how to access and utilize this service.
- Workforce Connection Centers work in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to coordinate American Sign Language interpreter services for job seekers who are deaf and hearing impaired. Additionally, each center is trained on how to access and successfully implement phone relay services for deaf and hearing-impaired customers.
- NMDWS has an inventory of all publications produced and printed for the Workforce Connection Centers and translates publications including pamphlets, brochures, and guides regarding various programs and services available to job seekers, students, and employers.
- NMDWS completed an inventory on all signage, including Workforce Connection Center outside signs, posters in the resource rooms, access signage, etc. and translated signage into Spanish and any other additional/requested languages, as appropriate.

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.

The State Workforce Board is responsible for guiding ongoing strategic planning and implementation efforts; and will be reviewing and analyzing progress. As such, this plan reflects alignment with Governor Lujan Grisham's vision and strategies, including enhancement of coordination and partnership expectations for state and local entities.

NMDWS partnered with an independent consultant to hold a series of facilitated meetings with all core programs, combined partners (including TANF) and key stakeholders on the development of the State's visions, goals and strategies for the State Plan. Regional input sessions included participants from regional local workforce development board members, Chief Elected Officials, regional service providers, business representatives, higher educational institutions, and other significant regional stakeholders. The planning sessions were:

- Kick-off Lab with core partners and SWDB members – June 12, 2023
- Southwestern Area Regional Lab – July 10, 2023

- Eastern Area Regional Lab – July 12, 2023
- Northern Area Regional Lab – July 31, 2023
- Central Area Regional Lab – August 1, 2023

On August 9, 2023, NMDWS invited the local area workforce development board executive administrators, one-stop shop operators, and Title I providers to review the input from the regional sessions, refine goals and strategies, and provide other in-depth input.

Additionally, NMDWS hosted multiple virtual public input sessions providing an opportunity for all partners and stakeholders, to include the general public, to contribute and comment to the development of the State's vision and goals for the New Mexico's workforce. Public input sessions were organized to facilitate participation from job seekers, employers, advocates, and the general public, in addition to workforce partners. Public input forums occurred in August 2023.

Finally, the State Workforce Development Board, which includes representation from all core and combined partners (including TANF) reviewed the vision and goals, community input and feedback and provided recommendations to the core programs and combined partners to strengthen the plan. NMDWS held a Final Lab with core partners and SWDB members and gave a preview of the state plan to the SWDB in September 2023.

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 approved the elements as serving	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
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 administering 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	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	
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

The Workforce Regions for the state include:

- Northern Workforce Region, includes Cibola, Colfax, Los Alamos, McKinley, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Santa Fe, San Miguel, and Toas Counties;
- Central Workforce Region, includes Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia, and Torrance Counties;

- Southwestern Workforce Region, includes Catron, Socorro, Sierra, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, and Doña Ana Counties;
- Eastern Workforce Region, includes Chavez, Curry, De Baca, Eddy, Guadalupe, Harding, Lea, Lincoln, Otero, Quay, Roosevelt, and Union Counties;

New Mexico is not identifying interstate planning regions at this time. This does not prohibit planning regions or local areas in New Mexico from regionally planning with other states for the purposes of that state's regional or local planning requirements.

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

The current four designated workforce regions have long been in existence in New Mexico. The four local areas include the Central, Northern, Eastern and Southwestern. NMDWS issued guidance that address both designation and re-designation of local areas. The current four designated local areas are required to submit a request in writing to the state that outlines satisfaction of requirements outlined in WIOA section 106(b)(2). If requesting a new designation, the State Workforce Development Board reviews, if opposition is voiced by municipalities or counties within the area, a hearing is held and public comments are compiled and a recommendation is sent to the Governor for review. All this must occur prior to the beginning of the fiscal and program year. Criteria used to determine if performance and sustained fiscal integrity is conducted by NMDWS. Negotiated performance measures and fiscal reporting are required from each local area quarterly and is reviewed by the NMDWS – WIOA team to assure benchmarks and targets are being met. Additionally, a desk audit is conducted quarterly to assure data integrity and fiscal compliance. NMDWS also performs comprehensive monitoring annually which includes review of policies, procedures, performance and fiscal processes. Local areas not meeting performance or sustaining fiscal integrity results in technical assistance and/or corrective action when appropriate. Designated local areas have met the criteria as stated in 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

The State Workforce Development Board has reviewed and approved NMAC 11.2.32: WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT LOCAL AREA DESIGNATION PROCEDURE. The approved policy also includes the appeal process relating to designation of local areas. PART 32: WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT LOCAL AREA DESIGNATION PROCEDURE 11.2.32.10 APPEAL PROCEDURES: Any changes to existing local area designation by the state board may be appealed to the governor through DWS.

1. Appeals must be sent in writing to the department of workforce solutions, 401 Broadway NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102, to the cabinet secretary's attention.
2. The appeal must be filed within 14 calendar days after notification of the decision.

3. The appeal must contain a specific statement of the grounds upon which the appeal is sought.
4. The state board will have 60 days from the date the appeal is received to hold a public hearing to allow for comments and objections concerning the request.
5. The state board will review the record, including public comments, and will submit a recommendation to the governor within 25 business days of the hearing. The final decision rests with the governor.
6. If the decision of the appeal changes the designation, the changes will become effective on July 1st of the following year.
7. If a decision on appeal is not rendered in a timely manner, or if the appeal does not result in designation, the entity may request review by the US Secretary of Labor, under the procedures set forth in 20 CFR 667.640(a). [11.2.32.10 NMAC - N, 10/29/2019]

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

State Funding Mechanism Timeline for Local Infrastructure Costs and Appeals Process It is the policy of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) that it shall ensure that each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) will comply with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 and make every effort to reach consensus with its local partners to implement a local Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA), as part of the One-Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). As required by WIOA and stated TEGLE 16-18 the State Administrative Entity (SAE) determines the NMDW State Funding Mechanism for local infrastructure costs, and the process as described below, for use in the event that any local area in New Mexico is unable finalize its IFA by ninety (90) days after the start of the new fiscal year on July 1st. This process is being developed and annotated in a new NMDWS Policy #DWS 2020-002 and is put forth in summary form in this response.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) requires that Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) establish, as part of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) for non-personnel One-Stop related costs (including rent, security, technology and utilities). The law further requires the establishment of a State Funding Mechanism (SFM) to be used ONLY if local areas are unable to finalize a local IFA by 90 days after July 1st or September 1, which ever comes first. This policy establishes the State Funding Mechanism for New Mexico as well as the appeals process should an LWDB want to appeal the Governor's determination regarding a one-stop partner's portion of the funds. This appeals process must be described in the Combined State Plan as required by 20 CFR 678.750 (a)(b).

Process

Local Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) must be completed and included in a local MOU by within 90 days of the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1st. It is the responsibility of the LWDB Administrative Entity to inform NMDWS by September 1st if the LWDB believes they are at impasse locally and will require the use of the State Funding Mechanism (See Attachments 1 and 2). Questions regarding infrastructure cost funding issues should be directed to the WIOA Operations Manager for NMDWS. Questions regarding signatories for any of the partner

programs should be directed to the office of the WIOA Project Coordinator. It is important to note that it is and shall be in any case, the responsibility of the Local Workforce Development Board to obtain the information required to complete the State Funding Mechanism. Should the area choose to revert to the State Funding Mechanism, it is still the local workforce area's responsibility to provide the information necessary to complete the computation to the Governor. Local workforce areas have the primary responsibility to develop a local formula, all data required to effectuate the formula and drive agreement amongst its partners. If an area believes it cannot achieve an agreement, the Local Workforce Development Board Director must inform the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, WIOA Bureau in writing BY EMAIL or LOCAL MAIL no later than the close of business on September 1 annually. The written notification must be sent to:

NMDWS

C/O Operations and Performance Manager

401 Broadway NE

Albuquerque, NM 87102

NMDWS WIOA Deputy Secretary

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

A team representing both organizations shall review any request for use of the State Funding Mechanism with the Governor who will make a determination consistent with the WIOA Joint Rules Sections 678.700 through 678.760 within 30 days. This determination may include requiring additional information, a recommendation that the local area complete the work or the use of the State Mechanism. The simple request of the State Mechanism does not ensure its implementation nor does it absolve a local area of providing the information required to make a decision. This process includes the option to appeal a State Funding Mechanism decision, as outlined in the attached Attachment 1 & 2.

Appeals Process

1. Upon receipt of the specific terms of an SFM determination, if any LWDB, partner program or Chief Elected Official (CEO) disagrees with the State determination of the local area infrastructure budget, the LWDB may submit an appeal for cause to the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions as the acting State Administrative Entity (SAE) in writing no later than 21 calendar days after the determination regarding the portion of funds it is to provide.
2. All appeals submitted to the NMDWS in writing under (a) above shall state the basis for the appeal and shall include any documentary evidence that the LWDB would like the WIOA Operation Manager to review prior to rendering his or her decision.
3. NMDWS shall review the documentary evidence presented by the LWDB and shall request any additional information or conduct any investigation necessary to render a decision.
4. The Governor's decision shall be based on the written record and shall be rendered within 30 days after receipt of the appeal and be deemed final.

5. If a one-stop partner's appeal to NMDWS using the process described in 20 CFP 678.750 is successful and results in a change to the one-stop partner's infrastructure-cost contributions, then the LWDB's MOU must be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

Basis for Appeal: A LWDB, partner program, or Chief Elected Official may appeal the State determination based on the following:

1. The determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735(a);
2. The determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution limitations in § 678.735(b);
3. The determination was inconsistent with the cost contributions caps as described in 20 CFR 678.738.

ATTACHMENT 1: STATE FUNDING MECHANISM

This reflects the steps required should a Local Area Workforce Development Board be unable to reach consensus for a locally developed effort.

Related Definitions:

· IFA: Infrastructure Funding Agreement; part of the local one-stop partners' memorandum of understanding (MOU)

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LFM:

SFM:

Local Funding Mechanism (effectuated by local partners)

State Funding Mechanism

· MPC: Maximum Potential Cap

State Formula Steps

Step 1

Notice of failure to reach agreement given to the Governor If the LWDB, local one-stop partners, and CEO(s) cannot reach consensus on methods of sufficiently funding a one-stop center's infrastructure costs and the amounts to be contributed by each local partner program, the LWDB is required to notify the Governor no later than September 1st. In subsequent years in which agreements are renewed, notification must be given by July 1st. In years during which a grant competition takes place that may impact the formula, alternative timing may be necessary.

Step 2

Local negotiation materials provided to the Governor In order to assist the Governor in making these calculations and determinations, the LWDB must provide the appropriate and relevant materials and documents used in the negotiations under the LFM, preferably when notifying the Governor of the failure to reach agreement.

At a minimum, the LWDB must give the Governor:

1. The local WIOA plan;
2. The cost allocation methodology or methodologies proposed by the partners to be used in determining the proportionate share;
3. The proposed amounts or budget to fund infrastructure costs and the amount of partner
4. funds included;
5. The type of funds (cash, non-cash, and third-party in-kind contributions) available; (5) any proposed or agreed upon one-stop center or system budget; and
6. Any partially agreed upon, proposed, or draft IFAs.
7. The Local WDBs shall also provide the Governor additional materials that they or the Governor find to be appropriate.

Step 3

The Governor determines one-stop center infrastructure budget(s). The Governor must determine the infrastructure budget(s). Depending on the local delivery system structure, there may be more than one infrastructure budget, each of which is contained in a one-stop operating budget. While the Governor should take into account the one-stop center's operating budget, the Governor only has the power to determine the infrastructure budget under the SFM. The Governor must determine the infrastructure budget in one of two ways. If, as a result of an agreed upon infrastructure budget, only the individual programmatic contributions to infrastructure funding based upon proportionate use of the one-stop centers and relative benefit received are at issue, the Governor may accept the infrastructure budget, from which the Governor must calculate each partner's contribution consistent with the cost allocation methodologies contained in the Uniform Guidance. If, however, an infrastructure budget or budgets were not agreed upon in the local negotiations, or the Governor determines that the agreed upon budget does not adequately meet the needs of the local area or does not reasonably work within the confines of the resources available to that local area in accordance with the SAE guidance on one-stop infrastructure funding, then the Governor must use the State Funding Mechanism. This mechanism must identify the factors, as well as each factor's corresponding weight, that the Governor must use in determining the one-stop center infrastructure budget.

At a minimum, these factors should include:

1. The number of one-stop centers in a local area (each facility should warrant separate consideration);
2. The total population served by such centers;
3. The services provided by such centers; and

4. Any 2 factors relating to the operations of such centers in the local area that the State WDB

determines are appropriate (20 CFR 678.745, 34 CFR 361.745, and 34 CFR 463.745).

Step 4:

Governor establishes cost allocation methodology. After an infrastructure budget has been determined, the Governor must establish a cost allocation methodology that determines the distribution of infrastructure funding costs among the local one-stop partners in accordance with the principles of proportionate use of the one -stop center and relative benefit received. This allocation methodology must be consistent with the Federal Cost Principles of the Uniform Guidance in 2 CFR part 200, all relevant Federal regulations and statutes, further regulatory guidance, and the partner programs' authorizing laws and regulations. Beyond these requirements, the determining factor can be a wide range of variables, such as number of customers served, square footage used, or a different basis that is agreed upon for determining each partner's contribution level for infrastructure costs.

* A local area may use more than one cost allocation methodology to distribute costs.

Step 5

Partners' proportionate shares are determined. Once a methodology is established, the Governor must use this methodology to determine each required one-stop partner's proportionate share of infrastructure funding costs. The Governor must take into account a number of factors in reaching a proportionate share determination including:

1. The costs of administration of the one-stop delivery system for purposes not specifically Related to a one-stop center for each partner (such as costs associated with maintaining the LWDB or information technology systems);
2. Statutory requirements for each partner program;
3. Each one-stop partner's ability to fulfill such requirements; and
4. All other applicable legal requirements.

The Governor may draw upon any proportionate share determinations made during the local negotiations, including any agreements reached at the local level by one or more partners, as well as any other materials or documents from the negotiating process. In some instances the Governor does not determine each one-stop partner's contribution amounts for infrastructure costs. Should there be a partner where the policy-making authority is placed in an entity or official that is independent of the authority of the Governor with respect to the funds provided for the AEFLA program, postsecondary career and technical education activities authorized under Perkins V, the VR program, or any other partner program, the determination of the amount each of the applicable partners must contribute to assist in paying the infrastructure costs of one-stop centers must be made by the official or chief officer of the entity with such authority, in consultation with the Governor.

For other required partner programs in which grant awards are made to entities that are independent of the authority of the Governor, such as Job Corps center contractors or grant recipients of the DOL- administered national programs, the determination of the amount each of

the applicable partners must contribute to assist in paying the infrastructure costs of one-stop centers continues to be made by the Governor, through the authority granted to the entities by WIOA and its implementing regulations.

Step 6

Governor calculates statewide caps. Once the Governor has created a cost allocation methodology, the Governor then must calculate the statewide caps to determine the maximum amounts that required partner programs could be required to contribute toward infrastructure funding in that local area. There are no statewide caps for additional partners because the SFM does not apply to them. The statewide caps are a statutory requirement for purposes of the SFM, even when only one local area is unable to reach consensus on an IFA through the LFM. However, the caps only restrict the infrastructure cost contributions required of one-stop partners within the local area(s) that has (or have) not reached agreement. The caps used in the application of the SFM are referred to as the applicable program caps, which must be calculated by the Governor using the five sub-steps listed below.

In the event that more than one local area in a State does not reach agreement, then the aggregate of the infrastructure funding costs that must be contributed by each required one-stop partner in all of the local areas that did not reach consensus is restricted by the applicable program cap. For example, if three of four LWDB did not reach consensus, then the required infrastructure funding contributions of each required one-stop partner under a particular program in these three areas would be added together, the sum of which could not exceed the calculated applicable program cap.

The Governor must take five sub-steps to calculate the applicable program cap for any given program.

Sub-Step 1: The Governor must apply a partner's individual applicable limiting percentage (the statutory percentages listed in WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(d))—which is dependent on the type of program (see chart in Attachment 2)—to the total Federal funding which that program receives for the affected program year to reach the maximum potential cap (MPC). The applicable limiting percentage for a program is listed in Attachment 2 and in WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(d), 20 CFR 678.738(c), and 34 CFR 463.738(c). Some programs will use previous years' funding to determine the cap due to internal program funding allocation or re-allotment methods.

Sub-Step 2: The Governor must select a determining factor or factors that reasonably indicates the use of one-stop centers in the State. This will be the percentage of the Title 1 WIOA funding each local workforce area receives

Sub-Step 3: The Governor applies the determining factor(s) to all local areas across the State, and then determines the percentage of the factor(s) that is applicable to those areas that reached consensus, or the consensus areas' factor percentage.

Sub-Step 4: The Governor then applies the consensus areas' factor percentage to the MPC to find the consensus areas' portion of the MPC

Sub-Step 5: The Governor subtracts the amount equal to the consensus local areas' portion of the MPC from the MPC. The remaining amount is the applicable program cap for use in the local areas that have not reached consensus and are subject to the SFM.

Step 7: Governor assesses the aggregate total of infrastructure contributions as it relates to the statewide cap.

Once the Governor has determined the applicable program cap for each program, as well as the proportionate share of the infrastructure costs that the Governor has determined under Step 5 would be required of each local required one-stop partner in a non-consensus area without regard to the cap, the Governor must ensure that the funds required to be contributed by each partner program in the non-consensus local area(s), in aggregate, do not exceed the applicable program cap.

If the aggregate total contributions are below the applicable program cap, then the Governor must direct the one-stop partners to contribute what was determined to be their proportionate shares. If the aggregate total contributions exceed the cap, then the Governor may either:

1. Inquire as to whether those local partner programs that have pushed the aggregate total contributions above the applicable program cap (i.e., those whose contributions would have otherwise exceeded the Statewide cap on contributions) are willing to contribute beyond the applicable program cap in accordance with their proportionate share; or
2. Allow the LWDB, one-stop partners, and CEO(s) to:

Re-enter negotiations to reassess each one-stop partner's proportionate share and make adjustments and identify alternate sources of funding to make up the difference between the capped amount and the proportionate share of infrastructure funding of the one stop partner; and Reduce infrastructure costs to reflect the amount of funds available without exceeding the applicable program cap level.

Step 8

Governor adjusts proportionate shares.

The Governor must make adjustments to specific local partners' proportionate share in accordance with the amounts available under the applicable program cap for the associated program, if the LWDB, CEO(s), and the required one-stop partners fail to reach agreement on how to address the situation in which the proportionate share exceeds the cap using the approaches described in Step 7. The aggregate total contribution of a program's local one-stop partners under the SFM may not exceed the applicable program cap.

Appeals Process

1. Upon receipt of the specific terms of an SFM determination, if any LWDB, partner program or Chief Elected Official (CEO) disagrees with the State determination of the local area infrastructure budget, the LWDB may submit an appeal for cause to the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions as the acting State Administrative Entity (SAE) in writing no later than 21 calendar days after the determination regarding the portion of funds it is to provide.
2. All appeals submitted to the NMDWS in writing under (a) above shall state the basis for the appeal and shall include any documentary evidence that the LWDB would like the WIOA Operation Manager to review prior to rendering his or her decision.

3. NMDWS shall review the documentary evidence presented by the LWDB and shall request any additional information or conduct any investigation necessary to render a decision.
4. The Governor's decision shall be based on the written record and shall be rendered within 30 days after receipt of the appeal and be deemed final.
5. If a one-stop partner's appeal to NMDWS using the process described in 20 CFP 678.750 is successful and results in a change to the one-stop partner's infrastructure-cost contributions, then the LWDB's MOU must be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

Basis for Appeal: A LWDB, partner program, or Chief Elected Official may appeal the State determination based on the following:

1. The determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735(a);
2. The determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution limitations in § 678.735(b);
3. The determination was inconsistent with the cost contributions caps as described in 20 CFR 678.738.

ATTACHMENT 1: PROGRAMMATIC STATEWIDE CAPS

Limiting Percentages for Programmatic Statewide Caps on Infrastructure Funding under the State Funding Mechanism Program Type Limiting Percentage

WIOA title I program (youth, adult, or dislocated worker) 3%

Wagner-Peyser Act ES 3%

Adult Education 1.5%

Perkins V 1.5% of funds made available for postsecondary level programs and activities and funds used to administer postsecondary level programs and activities in the prior year

Unemployment Insurance 1.5% of Fiscal Year 2019 (or applicable UI funding) previous year)

Federal VR funding Vocational Rehab 1.5% of Fiscal Year 2019 (or applicable previous year)

Federal VR funding

Other required partners including Job Corps; Youth Build; Native American programs; MSFW (NFJP) programs; SCSEP; TAA; TANF; SNAP; employment and training programs; and programs authorized under sec. 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 1.5% of funds from the previous year spent by entities to provide employment and training activities, plus any associated administrative costs Additional (non-required) partners SFM does not apply.

ATTACHMENT 2: New Mexico Determining Factors

When the State Funding Mechanism (SFM) is used, the total amount that any one partner can contribute is limited by a “determining factor.” New Mexico is using the Title 1 WIOA funding formulas as the determining factor.

To reach the percentages shown below, the funding allocations for Program Year (PY) 2019 were reviewed. Each local area’s allocations were averaged across the Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker programs. The total of those allocations that each local area received was then calculated as a percentage of the statewide total allocations. These percentages will be used to reduce the maximum contribution under the State Funding Mechanism, based on which local areas do not reach agreement.

Percent of State Total:

- Central Workforce Development Region 40.65%
- Eastern Workforce Development Region 15.87%
- Northern Workforce Development Region 21.90%
- Southwest Workforce Development Region 21.58%

Total 100.00%

USDOL recommends that the determining factor should reasonably indicate the use of one-stop centers in the state. The funding allocations were chosen because they already represent a proportionate need for the system based on demographic and unemployment data.

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

NMDWS issues state-level policies and technical assistance guides to support the implementation of WIOA implementation. Information is available on-line and can be found at <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/WIOA-Policy-Plans-Annual-Reports>

- ***Electronic File Content Management STAG (May 2015)*** – Policy regarding electronic file storage and imaging standards for workforce programs utilizing the New Mexico Workforce Connection On-Line System – NMWCOS).
- ***WIOA Eligibility STAG (July 2015)*** – Introductory guide summarizing key concepts and requirements of WIOA eligibility for basic career services, individualized career services, training services, supportive services, follow-up and eligible training providers.
- ***DWS 16-001 – One-Stop Operator.*** This workforce guidance letter provides information, criteria, and guidance that encourage Local Workforce Development Boards to establish One-Stop Operator scopes of works that meet requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

- **DWS 16-002 – One-Stop Certification.** To provide guidance, process, and deadlines for the certification of the Workforce Connection Centers and one-stop delivery system conducted by the local workforce development boards, and to set criteria for the development of local policy for one-stop certification.
- **DWS 16-003 – Local Governance.** This policy provides guidance on the appointment of local boards and outlines the roles, responsibilities and authority of the chief elected officials and the local boards in regard to the local workforce system.
- **DWS 16-004 – Eligible Training Provider Certification System.** This guidance provides new information, criteria, and procedures that inform the local workforce development boards, local administrative entities and workforce system partners of changes to the Eligible Training Provider system.
- **DWS 16-005 – One-Stop Common Identifier.** This guidance provides new information, criteria, and procedures that inform the local workforce development boards, local administrative entities and workforce system partners of changes to the Eligible Training Provider system.
- **DWS 16-006 – Infrastructure Funding.** These guidelines fulfill the WIOA requirement that the Governor issue guidance to State and local partners for negotiating cost sharing, service access, service delivery and other matters essential to the establishment of effective local workforce development services.
- **DWS 16-007 – Self Sufficiency.** To update the State WIOA Self-Sufficiency Wage Standards for grant recipients on the use when determining eligibility for participants in need of Individualized Career Services and/or Training Services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- **DWS 16-008 – Incumbent Workers.** The purpose of this guidance is to provide direction to Local Workforce Development Boards regarding the permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds for training activities associated with incumbent workers.
- **DWS 17-002 – Transfer of Funds.** To provide guidance and specific procedures for transferring of funds between the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs by outlining the criteria and information required when submitting a request to transfer.
- **DWS 17-003 – Use of Supplemental Wage Data.** To provide direction to workforce system stakeholders regarding permissible use of supplemental wage information to assist in fulfilling the performance accountability requirements under §116 of WIOA.
- **DWS 18-001 – Procurement and Contracting.** To provide policy guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB), One-Stop Career Center Operators and other local workforce investment partners with respect to the state’s policy regarding procurement and contracting requirements.
- **DWS 18-002 – Individual Training Account – Change 2** The purpose of this guidance is to provide direction to Local Workforce Development Board in the development of a local policy on Individual Training Accounts.

- ***DWS 18-003 - Negotiating Performance Goals with WIOA Title 1 PYS 2018 and 2019.*** To inform local boards and the Chief Elected Officials of the guidelines for the negotiation process for the WIOA title 1 programs for PY 2018 and 2019.
- ***DWS 18-004 – Youth Program Eligibility.*** To provide direction to workforce systems stakeholders including Local Workforce Development Boards and youth program service providers, the Youth Eligibility Requirements for WIOA Title 1 Youth Program.
- ***DWS 18-005 – Assistance to Wage Claimants.*** Provides information and procedures to Local Workforce Development Boards regarding providing assistance to individuals who wish to file wage claims in the Workforce Connection Centers.
- ***DWS 18-006 – On-the-Job-Training.*** To provide guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards on the development of local policies and procedures to administer On-the-Job-Training (OJT) contracts under WIOA Title 1 Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs.
- ***DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 1- Issued - 06.10.2019***
- ***DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 2- Issued – 05.26.2020***
- ***DWS 18-006 On-the-Job-Training – Change 3 (Reimbursement Waiver)- Issued – 01.07.2022***
- ***20-001 Negotiating Performance Goals – Issued – 01.01.2020***
- ***20-002 NMDWS Adult/Dislocated Worker Eligibility – Issued- 12.08.2021***
- ***20-003 DWG Statewide long-term unemployed definition – Issued – 12.10.2021***
- ***22-001 WIOA Self Sufficiency Policy – Issued – 07.03.2023***

Additionally, two policies issued through the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) include:

- ***Title 11 Chapter 2 Part 4 – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Governance.*** This policy outlines the local governance structure in New Mexico as required by WIOA, to administer the implementation of workforce development activities in the designated regions. This policy also provide guidance on the appointment of local boards and outlines the roles, responsibilities and authority of the CEOs and the local boards in regard to the local workforce system.
- ***Title 11 Chapter 2 Part 21 –Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Grievance and Complaint Resolution Procedures.*** This policy establishes procedures for processing grievances and complaints as required by WIOA. These procedures apply to all levels of the New Mexico workforce system and covers equal opportunity requirements, discrimination grievances, state and local WIOA complaints and criminal fraud and abuse.

NMDWS has also made significant progress in developing state technical assistance guidance to support the effective implementation of WIOA at the local level, as follows.

In addition, the following fiscal policies have been updated to align with WIOA expectations.

- ***#04-03 – Allowable Cost.***
- ***#04-04 – Allowable Use of Funds and Adherence to UGG.***
- ***#04-05 – Cash Management.***
- ***#04-06 – Subrecipient Monitoring and Management.***
- ***#04-07 – Time and Labor Reporting.***

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.

New Mexico intends use the Governor's set aside funding to support the following activities.

- Fostering the development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches for addressing the needs of employers and workers within the state by implementing innovative programs and strategies.
- Developing strategies for effectively serving individuals with barriers to employment and for coordinating programs and services among one-stop partners.
- Cover projects focused on improving coordination across systems; specifically, a partnership with Adult Education to create access to integrated curriculum designed to help adults complete their high school equivalency while engaged in related instruction.
- Support youth engagement work statewide to support Governor Lujan Grisham's vision that all students are prepared for college and/or career. NMDWS, in partnership with the Public Education Department, are expanding work-based learning and internship opportunities by coordinating business outreach with high schools. The goal is to continue increasing the number of pre-apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships and paid work experiences that are linked to career pathways identified by schools and students.
- Support sector strategy development; specifically, ongoing technical assistance and training for the four local workforce development boards and statewide professional development with core programs and combined partners. NM envisions utilization of these funds over the next four years to coordinate partnerships with post-secondary institutions and training providers to design training programs that are fully aligned with industry requests and needs.
- Provide technical assistance by hosting workforce conferences, summits, and workshops to, as appropriate, local boards, chief elected officials, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and eligible providers, in local areas. Technical assistance shall include the development and training of staff, the development of exemplary program activities to local areas that fail to meet local performance accountability measures.

Evaluations of activities performed under the WIOA Title I programs will be conducted as required by 20 CFR 682.220. The Economic Research and Analysis Bureau (ER&A) of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions will be the lead for facilitating and organizing the analysis. The subject matter of evaluation is discussed and determined by the State Workforce Board, and a timeline and a description of the evaluation's methodology is prepared and presented for review and consideration. Evaluations of customer satisfaction and employer needs are conducted annually, as required by the State WIOA Plan, and the results are shared with the State and local boards.

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.

NMDWS is setting aside 25 percent of Dislocated Worker funds for Rapid Response activities and additional assistance to go to local areas. Funds provide rapid response services to as many companies and workers as possible regardless of the size of event, through formalized coordination with NMDWS Rapid Response Team learns of impending layoffs. Many companies will contact the Rapid Response Coordinator to notify them of a layoff and invite them to come on site to help the dislocated workers and/or Rapid Response team will reach out to companies extending services in accordance with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act, a WARN notice is required when a business with 100 or more full-time workers is laying off at least 50 people at a single site of employment or employs 100 or more workers who work at least a combined 4,000 hours per week, and is a private for-profit business, private non-profit organization, or quasi-public entity separately organized from regular government. The WARN Act requires employers to provide written notice at least 60 calendar days in advance of covered plant closings and mass layoffs. An employer's notice assures that assistance can be provided to affected workers, their families, and the appropriate communities through the State Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit and gives workers and their family transition time to seek alternative jobs or enter skills training programs to remove barriers to employment and training. State Rapid Response teams respond within 12 to 48 hours of notification of a layoff by coordinating with the employer to provide on-site information to the workers and employers about employment and retraining services that are designed to help participants find new jobs. In cases of natural disaster, response teams will also coordinate with FEMA and other entities. Rapid Response services include assistance filing for unemployment insurance, job search and placement assistance; hiring event coordination for immediate hire, labor market information (occupational information and economic trends); on-the-job training; classroom training; and/or referral to basic and remedial education. Teams also address at-risk companies and workers by educating employers about layoff aversion strategies.

Rapid Response teams provide services to employers and workers in mass layoff situations and conducting claim filing activities, when needed. Rapid Response staff serves as a key point of contact for businesses and are also be used to educate employers about layoff aversion strategies. Rapid Response is typically initiated when the state Rapid Response team learns of impending layoffs. Many companies will contact the Rapid Response team to notify them of a

layoff and invite them to come on site to help the dislocated workers. In accordance with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act, a WARN notice is required when a business with 100 or more full-time workers is laying off at least 50 people at a single site of employment or employs 100 or more workers who work at least a combined 4,000 hours per week, and is a private for-profit business, private non-profit organization, or quasi-public entity separately organized from regular government. The WARN Act requires employers to provide written notice at least 60 calendar days in advance of covered plant closings and mass layoffs. An employer's notice assures that assistance can be provided to affected workers, their families, and the appropriate communities through the State Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit and gives workers and their family transition time to seek alternative jobs or enter skills training programs. Rapid Response services also include notifying Chief Elected Officials in the affected respective area, so that additional support such as community resources can be better coordinated to assist those being affected by the layoff.

D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

In cases of natural disaster or other emergency situations, response teams will also coordinate with FEMA and other entities to provide additional assistance to local areas that experience such dislocation events that exceed the capacity of the local area to respond with existing resources. Rapid Response services may include information on unemployment insurance, job search and placement assistance; labor market information (occupational information and economic trends); on- the-job training; classroom training; and/or referral to basic and remedial education.

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)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

The TAA program is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid to U.S. workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The State provides early intervention to worker groups on whose behalf a TAA petition has been filed. A petition must be filed with the U.S. Department of Labor by or on behalf of a group of

workers who have lost or may lose their jobs or experienced a reduction in wages as a result of foreign trade. After the Department of Labor investigates the facts behind the petition, it applies statutory criteria to determine whether foreign trade was an important cause of the threatened or actual job loss or wage reduction. If the Department grants the petition to certify the worker group, individual workers in the group may apply for TAA benefits and services through the Workforce Connection Centers. TAA offers a variety of benefits and services to support workers in their search for reemployment, including opportunities to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed. The program benefits and services available to individual workers are administered by the State. Program eligibility, technical assistance, and oversight are conducted by state merit staff. This includes job training, job search and relocation allowances, income support, and assistance with healthcare premium costs. These services are administered by cooperating state agencies using federal funds.

TAA participants come from a variety of backgrounds and industries, and therefore many enter the program with a wide array of skills and experience. However, the majority of TAA participants who enter the program face similar challenges in obtaining reemployment, which can include no post-secondary degree, job skills solely in the manufacturing sector, and an average age of 46 with over 12 years of experience in a specific job that may no longer exist. The TAA program has been developed through legislation, regulation, and administrative guidance to best serve the needs of this unique population.

The State administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program in both Albuquerque and Silver City, which pays for 100 percent of books, tuition, fees, and supplies for qualified individuals. In 2015, New Mexico was awarded a \$15 million grant from the Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT), called the New Mexico Skill Up Network: Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Health Care (SUN PATH). Participants include TAA workers, veterans and low-skilled adults. The grant funds half the salaries and office space of seven of the State's Employment Services staff who work with the consortium of New Mexico colleges as job development coaches. The goals of the grant are to:

- Expand capacity and systemic improvements in the delivery of healthcare career pathways that align with industry needs.
- Increase the attainment of degrees, certifications, and industry-recognized credentials; and
- Create strategic alignment between education and workforce systems, resulting in improved employment outcomes, retention, and average earnings.

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.

New Mexico continues to use work-based learning opportunities to support employers and participants with high quality training. Work-based opportunities include On the Job (OJT), Customized Training, Incumbent Worker Training, Transitional Jobs and Work Experience Training. Each of these approaches develops and improves career pathways for individuals by providing increased exposure to an occupation while gaining training and skills that also help the business by offsetting training costs. One Stop staff work with industry and individuals' businesses to identify vacancy needs and to work in partnership to incorporate skill building into a work-site employment opportunity. On-the-Job Training is primarily used for participants who have been assessed for work readiness and who demonstrated a number of skills that prepare them for on-site training. OJTs equip the participant with specialized skills and competencies needed to perform a specific job and helps prepare them for opportunities for advancement. The participating business has a major investment in the OJT process as they assist by providing on-site mentoring and coaching and skill building based on a specific training plan developed in partnership with one-stop center staff, the individual and the employer.

NMDWS ensures each training approach is funded at the regional level. A State Workforce Guidance Letter outlining the criteria and expectations of each of the training approach guides the implementation. NMDWS guidance letters set standards for training services that are utilized for skill building and mentoring into employment opportunities. In early 2019 the OJT and ITA policy were revised to provide additional clarification and support to also include both registered and non-registered apprenticeship programs. The guidance letters also encourage the inclusion of work-based learning opportunities with an individual training accounts to ensure participants are prepared to enter and sustain employment long-term. This approach has improved the partnership with the business community as they share a role/responsibility in the development employees to meet specific industry demands. NMDWS will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches and together with the core program and combined partners identify opportunities to provide technical assistance and training to regional/state staff to innovate approaches that provide flexibility and creativity for high quality trainings.

Specific partnership with core program and combined partner program business engagement teams are key to expanding the availability of work-based learning opportunities. As we continue to move forward with sector strategies, core programs and combined partners are working together to align plans to expand work-based learning in an effort to address expressed industry needs. New Mexico's strategy for the next 4 years is to increase the number of industry-led initiatives regionally that are aligned with training programs and that include work-based training opportunities. The goal is to increase the access to work-based learning opportunities as a key strategy to improve readiness and preparedness. Using a sector strategy approach targets employer inputs on workforce gaps and challenges. The regional workforce development boards and their partners will lead efforts with targeted industries identified by Governor Lujan Grisham. Over the next four years NM envisions job growth in these industries that will lead to a reduction in overall unemployment and increases in economic health and well-being for job seekers.

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).

Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high quality career pathway. It provides industry with the opportunity to develop their future workforce and apprentices receive paid hands-on training, progressive wage increases, classroom instruction and a portable, nationally recognized credential. During the apprenticeship, the on-the-job training must be under the direct supervision of a skilled journey worker/mentor and they obtain wage increases as they progress through the program. Additionally, the supplemental classroom education is specific to the employer's unique training needs which align with the industry standard, typically at little to no expense to the apprentice. Apprenticeship training ranges in length from 1-5 years, based on the industry, can be in multiple industries and can include both union and nonunion programs. Every state and territory in the U.S. offer apprenticeship training opportunities. The federal Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship (OA) administers some programs and State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA's) administer programs in other states. Program registration involves a formal registration process and must comply with the regulatory requirements. New Mexico is a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) state and the NM Department of Workforce Solutions the registration agency for New Mexico. As the registration agency, it is our responsibility to aid potential employers/organizations in the registration process to ensure all regulatory requirements are outlined within the program standards. Technical assistance and guidance is provided to potential and existing sponsors in the development, implementation and administration of the apprenticeship program at no cost. Apprenticeship staff are also responsible for program compliance to assure the quality and integrity of the apprenticeship training; they also conduct outreach to expand apprenticeship and increase awareness of registered apprenticeship as a viable career pathway.

All SAA's must have a State Apprenticeship Council (SAC). In N.M. the SAC is comprised of a 9-member council (3 employer, 3 union and 3 public members). The Cabinet Secretary of Workforce Solutions and Public Education (or their designees) are ex-officio, non-voting members of the SAC and the director of apprenticeship serves as the executive secretary and is also an ex-officio, non-voting member. The role of the SAC is to provide advice and guidance to DWS on the operation of the state's apprenticeship system. They encourage the development of, and assist in the establishment of apprenticeship training opportunities, review all applications for the registration of an apprenticeship program, revisions to existing apprenticeship programs and provide a final recommendation for the final action on applications and they work in cooperation with DWS to review the activities of all registered apprenticeship programs and all registered apprentices.

There are 50 apprenticeship programs in the state and 2,560 registered apprentices; this is a 58% increase in the number of registered apprentices since 2019. Most programs are in the Central region of the state and are in the building and construction trades. However, there are also programs in other regions of the state and in nontraditional occupations, including an early childhood apprenticeship program, medical assistant, information technology, automotive technician, diesel mechanic and others. Efforts to expand apprenticeship continue and we are currently in communication with key partners to register a teacher apprenticeship soon and the state's first youth apprenticeship program.

Recently the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) was awarded a U.S. Department of Labor grant (State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula-SAEF) of approximately \$388,000. Most of the funding will support two additional apprenticeship positions to assist with apprenticeship expansion activities and to provide support services to apprentices. The grant funding is potentially available for 4 additional years, pending program outcomes.

DWS provides funding through the Apprenticeship Assistance Act (AAA) to aid program sponsors with the cost of related technical instruction for apprentices; however, not all programs opt to apply for the funding. The FY 24 AAA funding allocation is \$600,000 and 15 program sponsors applied for the funding. Additional funding through the Public Work and Apprenticeship Training (PWAT) is also available to program sponsors to aid with the cost to administer their registered apprenticeship programs. This funding is specifically for programs in the building/construction trades. Both AAA and PWAT have regulatory requirements to obtain the funding.

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).

Eligible Training Providers and programs that were eligible under WIA may remain eligible until June 30, 2017 unless otherwise notified. The State has established the following procedures for determining the initial eligibility of new providers, procedures for reviewing and renewing eligibility for all providers at least every two years, and procedures for transitioning existing WIA providers to WIOA.

Initial Eligibility Process

Training providers or programs may apply for initial eligibility at any time. All applications for the ETPL will be completed using the Workforce Connection On-Line System. The online application process for training providers starts with verifying the training provider is licensed, certified, or authorized by the New Mexico Department of Higher Education, or the relevant state agency or oversight agency, to operate training programs. If a provider is in compliance with the oversight agency, the provider can proceed to the next step in the application process. If a provider is not in compliance with the oversight agency, the provider will not be able to apply for inclusion on the ETPL until they meet the necessary requirements.

Once the online initial eligibility application is submitted by the service provider, the LWDB has 30 working days to review for completeness and submit a recommendation to the SAE for approval.

Initial Eligibility Criteria

Training providers or programs applying for initial eligibility must provide the following information through the online application:

- Describe each program of training services to be offered.
- Provide information on cost of attendance, including costs of tuition and fees.

- Identify type of industry-recognized certificate or credential, including recognized post-secondary credentials.
- Indication of whether the provider has developed the training in partnership with a business (and the name of the business).
- Information that addresses alignment of the training services with in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- Outline of the prerequisites or skills and knowledge required prior to the commencement of training.
- Performance information for all students regardless of funding source. To support this effort, the State will also work to acquire performance information already in existence at other state agencies. Training providers and programs that have not been in existence for at least two years will be required to provide available student and program data for the time period in existence.

Continued Eligibility Process

After the initial eligibility period of one year, training providers must be reviewed, updated and approved for continued eligibility every two (2) years. Applications for continued eligibility must show the training provider is still authorized by the appropriate oversight agency. Dropping off the list for a period of time does not return a provider to an initial eligibility status. All applications for continued eligibility must be completed using the Workforce Connection On-Line System.

Continued Eligibility Criteria

Training providers or programs applying for continued eligibility must adhere to the following criteria in addition to the criteria listed under the Initial Eligibility Criteria section of this policy.

- Total number of participants enrolled in the program.
- Total number of participants completing the program.
- Total number of participants exiting the program.
- Information regarding the completion rate of participants.
- Information on recognized post-secondary credentials received by program participants.
- Description of how the provider will ensure access to training services throughout the State, including rural areas and through the use of technology.
- Description of how the providers provide training services to individuals who are employed and/or individuals with barriers to employment.
- Information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs within WIOA title 1B, including partner programs, (i.e. Adult basic education and literacy, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.) that are used to

provide additional information about overall effectiveness, quality and utilization of programs.

Performance Requirements

Beginning July 1, 2017, all Eligible Training Providers will be required to include the performance information, as detailed in Attachment 1, to remain eligible and obtain subsequent certification. To support this effort, the State will also work to acquire performance information already in existence at other state agencies. Once training providers and their programs have two years of data for the WIOA performance indicators, the State will collect the required information, determine performance outcomes and make the performance data available through the NM Workforce Connection On-Line System, for each training provider on the ETPL. Programs with less than 10 students enrolled will not be included in performance data.

Registered Apprenticeship and the ETPL

Under WIOA title I-B, Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors that request to be ETPs are automatically included on the list and will remain as long as the program is registered or until the program sponsor notifies the State that it no longer wants to be included on the list. Registered Apprenticeship programs are not subject to the same application and performance information requirements or to a period of initial eligibility or initial eligibility procedures as other providers because they go through a detailed application and vetting procedure to become a Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor with the United States Department of Labor or the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).

As of 2021 the DWS State ETP Administrator and SAA developed an opt in letter and acknowledgement form informing RAPs of the opportunity to automatically register on the ETPL. The letter and form are sent to the RAPs quarterly via the SAA. Additionally, the SAA reminds the members of the council during quarterly meetings. The opt in letter and form have been added to DWS website on the Apprenticeship page.

ETPL Procedures for Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors interested in being an ETP will be required to provide the following information to the State ETP Administrator:

- Occupations included within the Registered Apprenticeship program;
- The name and address of the Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor;
- The name and address of the Related Technical Instruction provider, and the location of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address;
- The method and length of instruction; and,
- The number of active apprentices.

The SAE works with the (SAA) to verify the status of Registered Apprenticeship programs as part of the State's review of the State list of eligible training providers at least every two years.

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).

With respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities under paragraph (2)(A) or (3) of WIOA section 133(b), priority shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services described in paragraph WIOA Section 134(b)(2)(A)(xii) and training services.

Priority of Service must always be given to covered persons (i.e. veterans and eligible spouses, including widows and widowers) regardless of whether or not the priority of service is in place. Priority of service is required for the provision of career services and training services, including individual training accounts, a veterans' priority as well as priority to public assistance recipients and low income individuals required in WIOA regulations will be established as follows:

- First priority will be provided to recipients of public assistance, low-income or individuals who are basic skills deficient who are also veterans or eligible spouses of veterans.
- Second priority will be provided to recipients of public assistance, low-income, or individuals who are basic skills deficient who are not veterans or spouses of veterans.
- Third priority will be provided to veterans or eligible spouses of veterans who are not recipients of public assistance, low-income or basic skills deficient.
- Last priority will be provided to Adults in need of service who are not recipients of public assistance, not low- income or basic skills deficient.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS
BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Criteria and Documentation Required with Transfer Request

Documentation to be included for transfer request consideration includes the following:

1. Brief analysis to justify the need to transfer the funds that is based on current labor market information; including activities such as the number of TAA petitions and Rapid Response events in the local area, anticipated layoffs based on local economic conditions. Brief analysis will include how these activities will impact regional activities for dislocated workers.
2. Budget documenting the LWDB will meet the 40% expenditure requirement for funding available during the program year for Adults and Dislocated Workers; and
3. Description of strategies LWDB will use to guarantee the ability to meet performance measures for the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs as a result of increased and decreased fund amounts.

Process/Requirements

LWDBs must prepare and submit a written request to the SAE that includes all supporting documentation to justify transfer request. The SAE will review requests and provide a determination within 30 days of receiving a request.

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).

Co-enrollment policy is currently being developed and review by NMDWS, NMDVR, Adult Education and Commission for the Blind to release a joint agency policy. The purposed language for Title I and TAA co-enrollments is below.

WIOA and TAA program funds must be managed in a coordinated manner. Duplication of payment of training costs is not permitted. Under certain circumstances, the costs of training may be shared by the WIOA and TAA programs.

The TAA program must be the primary source of assistance to TAA program participants. If a TAA program participant requires assistance or services not authorized under the TAA program or if TAA program funds are unavailable or insufficient, assistance must be made available through the American Job Center network.

Under limited circumstances, TAA program participants may receive WIOA-funded training that would otherwise be provided under the TAA program. The most common circumstance is when a Trade petition has been filed by or on behalf of a group of workers, but a determination of group eligibility is pending. In this case, WIOA funds should be used for training in the short-term, until the TAA program determines the worker's eligibility and approves the training. In the event that a negative decision is rendered, and the petition is denied, the worker may continue as a WIOA participant. Training may be modified by the TAA program to allow a worker additional training under the TAA program to meet retraining needs as indicated in an individual's reemployment plan. The TAA program participant may remain co-enrolled in WIOA and the TAA Program if the individual needs continued career and supportive services through WIOA.

WIOA allows up to seventy-five (75) percent reimbursement to employers for on-the-job training (OJT), while the TAA program allows reimbursement of up to fifty (50) percent of the wage rate, the cost of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training. For approved OJT for a co-enrolled TAA program participant, the TAA program may reimburse employers up to fifty (50) percent and WIOA may reimburse employers up to an additional twenty-five (25) percent to bring the total reimbursement to the employer up to seventy-five (75) percent, provided that local area's WIOA OJT policy provides for a seventy (75) percent reimbursement rate.

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)

NMDWS has a co-enrollment policy currently being developed that will formally ensure WIOA and TAA co-enrolled participants receive funded benefits and services. Currently TAA case management staff are working with WIOA staff to enroll participants who have not previously

declined the co-enrollment services. The benefits of co-enrollment are explained to participants and encouraged. Reviews of each TAA participant file is conducted to identify those participants that have expressed they do not want to co-enrollment and have been documented.

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

NMDWS TAA and WIOA program coordinators will schedule group meetings and cross training with one-stop staff to develop SMART goals to help outline and streamline the process of co-enrollment. NMDWS believes this change will be reflected in future performance measures and ensure participants maximize all the benefits and services available.

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.¹¹ 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.

¹¹ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system and provides a framework through which states and local areas can leverage other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources to support in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school (OSY).

New Mexico is committed to providing high quality services for all young people. Beginning with career exploration and continued support for educational attainment. Opportunities are available for skills training for in-demand industries, such as pre-apprenticeships or internships. Also assisting in enrollment into post-secondary education, or a registered apprenticeship.

The Youth Program assists young people ages 14-24. WIOA funds provided to the state help local workforce development areas with resources. This allows to deliver comprehensive youth services that focus on assisting low-income youth with barriers to employment or post-secondary education. Local board grant agreements require funds to be allocated to a local area for eligible youth under WIOA. Funds are to be used to provide an objective assessment of academic and skill levels, and service needs of each participant. Service strategies that are linked to participant performance and identification of career pathways that include education and employment goals. Youth service providers are required to support 75 percent out-of-school youth and 20 percent work experience expenditure rate as required by WIOA.

Grant agreements with local boards require the boards to hold local youth providers and programs responsible for making the following services available to youth participants:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence- based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include: summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training opportunities;
- Occupational skill training;
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- Leadership development opportunities;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Follow-up services;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

The goal of the WIOA Youth program is to help youth attain the skills they need to gain meaningful, permanent employment and compete in the twenty-first century workforce. As it relates to program design, the grant agreements with local boards spell out required components of youth programs, which must be incorporated into youth provider contracts and reflected in contract scope of work. Funds allocated to a local area for eligible youth under WIOA section 128(b) must be used to carry out, for eligible youth, programs that:

- Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant, which assessment shall include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs

of such participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants;

- Develop service strategies for each participant that are directly linked to 1 or more of the indicators of performance described in WIOA section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii), and that shall identify career pathways that include education and employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant considering the assessment conducted; and
- Provide activities leading to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential; preparation for postsecondary educational and training opportunities; strong linkages between academic institutions; preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities, in appropriate cases, and; effective connections to employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations of the local and regional labor markets. WIOA Title II, Adult Education, provides these services for eligible New Mexicans age 16 and over, a population that includes out of school youth, and that referral to Adult Education Programs can meet this goal.

Out-of-School Youth Expenditure Requirement. WIOA requires a minimum OSY expenditure rate of 75 percent for youth formula-funded program. The 75 percent expenditure rate is a minimum requirement; therefore, local areas may spend up to 100 percent of their local area Youth funds on OSY as directed by local board policy. The OSY expenditure rate for local area funds is calculated after subtracting funds spent on administrative costs. Determination of whether a local area meets the 75 percent OSY expenditure requirement is made upon completion of expenditures of all funds in the specific program year's allotment. Local areas must track funds spent on work experience.

Expanded Work Experience Focus. Work experience is a critical WIOA youth program element. As such, local boards must implement the 20 percent minimum work experience expenditure rate. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education may include the following four categories: summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; pre-apprenticeship programs; internships and job shadowing; and on-the-job training opportunities. Program expenditures on the work experience program element include wages as well as staffing costs for the development and management of work experiences. The 20 percent minimum is calculated based on non-administrative local area youth funds and is not applied separately for ISY and OSY. Staffing costs must be reasonable and not exceed 10 percent of the work experience expenditures. Local areas must track funds spent on the 20 percent work experience requirement.

To deliver services, local boards procure service providers with expertise in working with populations targeted by WIOA, and incorporate WIOA requirements, oversight and performance expectations through those providers' contracts to ensure the quality of services provided. Local boards must identify youth service providers based on criteria established in state policy DWS

18-001 and consider the ability of the provider to meet performance and accountability measures based on the primary indicators of performance for youth programs. A complete risk assessment of every provider selected must include the following factors:

1. Cost Realism (can the services and the performance goals be delivered for the budgeted costs?)
2. Time Table (can the services and performance goals be met in the projected time table?)
3. Technical Content
4. Management/Fiscal Capability
5. Qualifications of staff assigned to the project
6. Experience in delivering comparable services
7. Demonstrated Performance
 - a. Providers prior experience;
 - b. Results of previous monitoring or audit results
 - c. Personnel capabilities (new , experienced, changeover)
 - d. Takes timely action to correct deficiencies;
 - e. Review financial and performance reports;

Additionally, boards may, at their discretion, implement a pay-for-performance contract strategy for certain elements, for which the local board may reserve and use not more than 10 percent of the total funds allocated to the local area under WIOA section 128(b).

Highlights of Accomplishments of the Youth Program. As NMDWS builds a stronger partnership with NM Carl Perkins programs through the Public Education Department College and Career Readiness Bureau, a Work Based Learning Coordinator, continues to be funded with Carl Perkins funds through the College and Career Readiness Bureau. The Work Based Learning Coordinator will works alongside the NMDWS Statewide Youth Engagement Coordinator, with local boards, and one-stop offices state wide to provide guidance on available resources for students engaged in Career Technical Education (CTE).

The Youth Team continues to provide technical assistance and training to the Local Workforce Development Boards and their WIOA funded youth programs and Wagner-Peyser staff on the best and promising practices in youth engagement, strategies for strengthening coordination with youth agencies and organizations, including secondary and post-secondary programs, in an effort to promote statewide awareness of the unique workforce needs of youth.

Targeted outcomes and goals include:

- Develop a toolkit of best and promising practices in youth engagement linked to positive youth development principals and youth activities under Title I of the WIOA, based on New Mexico's available resources and needs.
- Enhance awareness of and improve NMDWS tools and resources designed for youth created to enhance general awareness of the unique workforce needs of youth.
- Develop and facilitate partnerships with statewide youth organizations and agencies to promote unique needs and to identify opportunities for engagement and partnership at both state and local levels.
- Interpret and understand one-stop service delivery components and partners and identify opportunities to enhance and improve youth access and utilization of the workforce system.

Current examples of activities supporting youth engagement, and targeted outcomes/goals including school districts and government include:

Pre-Apprenticeship

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program provides career pathways for participants 16 – 24 years old by receiving on-the-job training in marketable occupations. Businesses have an opportunity to produce skilled talent for their industry and prepare pre-apprentices for sustainable employment. The program was designed to bridge skill gaps and help Pre-apprentices who are not employment-ready learn necessary skills to qualify for entry into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) and the competencies to successfully complete them. It also combines work-based, on-the-job learning with relevant technical education in the classroom. Students who participate graduate with a high school diploma, earn college credits, and industry credentials. They also start on a career path that continues after high school graduation.

Participating Pre-apprentices gain real-world, hands-on experience in a career field that piques their interest. They earn \$15.90 per hour for up to 400 hours with the possibility of a flexible schedule. Participating employers that host a Pre-apprentice help promote and develop participants with the skills needed to succeed in a specific industry. Wages are covered by New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions up to 400 hours. Workers Compensation coverage by New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. Businesses are committed to helping develop career exploration and provide industry specific mentorship from experts within the participants interested career field.

High School Apprenticeship Career Consultants

High School Apprenticeship Career Consultants serve as guides for young people in career exploration, helping New Mexico youth to personalize their educational journey based on their individual career interests and unique learning needs. Through targeted interactions and case management with high school and college students, High School Apprenticeship Career Consultants provide valuable workforce information, work skills preparation, career development opportunities, and paid work experiences. The overarching goal of High School Apprenticeship Career Consultants is to provide the necessary tools and insights to help young people make informed decisions about returning to school, enrolling in post-secondary education, career training program, pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship program, or starting a career.

Be Pro Be Proud

Be Pro Be Proud is an initiative led by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions in partnership with the New Mexico Center for Economic Opportunity spearheading the movement to bring a new generation of pride, progress, and professionals to New Mexico's skilled workforce. Be Pro Be Proud is a national workforce development initiative focused on attracting students and young adults to technical careers through exciting simulation experiences, and then connecting them to post-secondary opportunities to include registered apprenticeships and careers. The Be Pro Be Proud New Mexico mobile workshop unit will tour local middle schools, high schools, and community organizations and can be customized to a variety of professions and industries that are most relevant to specific communities.

The Be Pro Be Proud initiative is addressing a pressing national challenge. There are over 23% of current skilled professionals that are at or near retirement age. The next generation of new talent is not sufficient to fill the demand. The initiative targets many key audiences including high school and nontraditional students, current skilled professionals, legislators, parents, teachers, career coaches, and employers to dispel the myths about skilled trade professions. The mobile tours can be customized to professions and companies that are most relevant to the industry needs in New Mexico. The professions selected for Be Pro Be Proud New Mexico are Auto/EV Mechanics, Automation/Robotics, Carpenters/Construction, Commercial Trucking Driving, Electricians, Fiber Optics, Healthcare/Medical Technicians, Heavy Equipment Operators, HVAC, Lineworkers, Plumbers, and Welders.

Mock Interviews

As part of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's initiative to increase Youth Career and College Readiness Opportunities, the NMDWS Youth Team in partnership with the Workforce Connection Centers are supporting high schools around the state in providing mock interview opportunities for students. The goal of mock interview events is to provide students throughout New Mexico with the opportunity to enhance their soft skills, and to help reduce the stress and anxiety that may surround a young person during their first interview, whether it's for college or a career. We hope to boost confidence by acknowledging strengths during interviews, along with providing constructive feedback in a low-stress environment. NMDWS staff, Wagner-Peyser staff, and Local Workforce Board members will all participate as volunteer interviewers at annual mock interview events scheduled statewide.

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.

The state is committed to providing high-quality services for youth and young adults. The Governor's vision for youth includes ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to develop and achieve career goals through education and workforce training. Youth services should be business driven consistent with all other services within a region and state with the goal of building the workforce of the future. WIOA places a keen emphasis on the need to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth and encourages the alignment of core and other partner programs to better serve this target population. As such, through grant agreements

with its four local boards, the state has communicated the required minimum out-of-school youth expenditure rate of 75 percent for the Youth formula-funded program. As it relates to program design, these agreements spell out required components of youth programs, which must be incorporated into youth provider contracts and reflected in contract scope of work.

Specifically, funds allocated to a local area for eligible youth under WIOA section 128(b) must be used to carry out the following program elements.

Youth programs must provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant. Assessment must include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and any developmental needs, to identify appropriate services and career pathways for participants.

Youth programs must develop service strategies for each participant that are directly linked to one or more of the indicators of performance, as described in WIOA section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii). Programs must use assessments to identify career pathways that include education and employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant.

Youth programs must provide activities that:

- lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential
- prepare participants for postsecondary educational and training opportunities;
- include strong linkages between academic instruction;
- prepare participants for unsubsidized employment opportunities, as appropriate; and
- provide effective connections to employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations of the local and regional labor markets.

Local boards will be required to identify and select a youth provider with staffing that specializes in positive youth development and engagement, dropout prevention and leadership and work skills readiness. Involving core and other program partners, as appropriate, in conversations with the youth providers will ensure alignment in program design and service delivery for the targeted OSY population. Local boards and partner programs must collectively explore ways to leverage funds and resources to assist youth with barriers to employment, beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational and credential attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, such as pre-apprenticeships or internships, culminating with a good job along a career pathway, enrollment in post-secondary education, or a Registered Apprenticeship. Examples of services that can be coordinated across core and partner programs for OSY, where appropriate, include the following.

Career awareness regarding targeted industry and demand occupations. Specifically, this involves youth service provider support of youth work readiness and career path development into occupations that are based on appropriate skills levels, with an ultimate goal of ensuring youth have access to options based on their interests and skill levels.

Quality educational employment opportunities consistent with local and state goals and priorities. Specific activities include partnership with local universities, community colleges and technical training providers to identify and develop opportunities for out-of-school youth. For instance, creating a linkage between youth service providers and providers of adult education to jointly serve youth who lack high school equivalency (HSE) by simultaneously enrolling them in both an HSE course, as well as a credit-bearing course through the WIOA Youth program, could ideally lead to a post-secondary credential or other certification, gainful employment, or even self-sufficiency (particularly if the TANF population is targeted). An emphasis on high school credit recovery, high school equivalency and high school diploma completion and other certification programs will broaden employment opportunities for out of school, at-risk youth and youth with disabilities.

Strategies that help prepare youth for success in a range of postsecondary education and career opportunities specifically those defined as high growth and high demand. Specific activities includes working with local business and employers to understand needs, development of partnerships with universities, community colleges and trade schools to create training opportunities based on those needs. Additionally, local boards should communicate and share with school districts' Carl Perkins liaisons to guide classroom instructions and guidance counselor activities.

Other youth service strategies. Specific activities can include tutoring, alternative secondary school offerings, summer employment opportunities linked to academic and occupational learning, paid and unpaid work experiences, occupational skill training, leadership development opportunities, supportive services, mentoring, follow-up services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling.

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.

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system and provides a framework through which states and local areas can leverage other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources to support in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY). The Youth Program focuses on assisting transitional youth ages 14-24, particularly youth who are disadvantaged and have one or more barriers to employment. The goal of the program is to prepare these youth for post- secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or training credentials, and secure employment that has a positive career outlook.

Local board grant agreements require funds allocated to a local area for eligible youth under WIOA to be used to provide an objective assessment of academic and skill levels, and service needs of each participant, service strategies that are linked to participant performance, and identification of career pathways that include education and employment goals. Youth service providers support the 75 percent out-of-school youth and 20 percent work experience expenditure rate as required by WIOA.

Grant agreements with local boards also require the local youth providers and programs to implement activities following the guidance from WIOA. All of the providers include “youth specialists” available to conduct outreach, assessments, individual and group skills development, and some case management. Local boards will be required to ensure the youth providers include delivery of the 14 elements of service in their overall scope. The following describe services currently in place as well as areas local boards will further develop:

1. **Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidenced-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized postsecondary credential** – Local boards, in partnership with their youth providers and local youth serving organizations focus on all these components as an essential service for youth. All youth providers are implementing tutoring and study skills via group and individual instruction. Evidenced-based dropout prevention activities include case management, mentoring, follow up, incentive based approaches for school attendance. All youth providing agencies support courses for GED completion and all work closely with local school districts regarding access to alternative school options for credit recovery and diploma completion. All youth providers closely monitor youth involved in postsecondary educational opportunities to address challenges and barriers; as well as opportunities to enhance overall performance and outcome.
2. **Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services** – Local boards are engaged in partnership development with local community colleges, alternative educational programs for at-risk youth and young adults, such as YouthBuild, specialized Charter Schools, homeless/runaway shelters and independent and transitional living projects designed specifically for youth and young adults; additionally high school credit recovery and/or GED preparation programs offered through via night schools; community centers, faith based organizations and employers, such as the GED/Trade co-enrollment underway in the Central Region. Strategies also include partnership with juvenile justice, including youth drug courts and child welfare staff to assure youth are aware of alternative school services and opportunities to complete high school equivalency.
3. **Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational educational** – Local boards are currently engaged in implementing summer employment opportunities in partnership with local school districts, and city and county governments; On the job training programs currently exist in all four regions - OJT opportunities currently focused on converting internships. Additionally, NMDWS is working in partnership with Public Education to expand business engagement to increase availability of meaningful work-based opportunities, including paid experiences, internships and opportunities for job shadowing.
4. **Occupational skills training** – Local boards in the Central and Northern regions of the state benefit from an agreement currently in place with local community colleges to training entry level health care skills and early childhood certification courses; additionally the state has a Job Corps program and YouthBuild. All four local boards currently offer job readiness skill development to assist youth with career awareness, communication, and social and soft skill improvement. An NMDWS tool entitled Career

Exploration is available to all public and charter schools to increase career exploration and access to labor market information to drive career pathway planning. Strategies also include staff training and awareness on youth engagement and expansion of internships and apprenticeships programs statewide – NMDWS hosts an annual Youth Summit for youth providers to support best practices and awareness of the unique needs of youth.

5. **Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupational cluster** - As stated above, two community colleges are currently offering specific training in health care cluster, i.e. certified nurse assistant and early childhood certifications. Additionally Job Corps, YouthBuild, and HSE/Trade co-enrollment programs are available, however not statewide. Strategies to be explored and expanded include creation of additional focused occupational clusters with local community colleges.
6. **Leadership development opportunities** - Currently in New Mexico, youth serving agencies include civic engagement, peer-to-peer mentorship; service learning and leadership skill development as part of their overall work. Additionally projects such as Mission: Graduate, Together for Brothers and NMCAN, organized in the central region, focus on awareness of the importance of youth engagement and leadership development as a core principle to increase graduation and employability of youth. NMDWS Youth Engagement Teams is concentrating efforts on Eastern and Southwestern regions to identify and strengthen youth serving organizations awareness of workforce tools, resources and strategies. Although the Central Region has the largest concentration of disconnected youth, as well as most organized youth serving organizations, efforts are needed to bolster capacity in other regions, specifically Eastern and Southwestern regions.
7. **Supportive services** - activities currently underway statewide include identifying items needed to enable youth to successfully enter and maintain employment. Case management is the primary vehicle used to identify these needs, as well as resource development to identify partners to support urgent and immediate needs such as transportation (i.e., bus passes), child care, work uniforms and supplies, etc. Strategies to be explored includes a comprehensive review of support services currently being provided and available funds, as well as identification of community partners and funding available for youth specific needs. NMDWS Monitoring Team conducts quarterly and an annual on-site review and supportive services for youth are closely monitored to assure they are being implemented effectively and timely.
8. **Adult mentoring** - Youth providers currently include adult mentoring in their services. Youth have access to youth specialists who provide support. Mission Graduate, NMCAN and Together for Brothers, current partners with the Central Region also have an adult mentoring component. Strategies to be explored includes exploration of statewide projects such as My Brother's Keeper, Together for Brothers and the Making Connections Project, as well as projects funded through NM Children Youth and Families Department to learn how adult/mentorship components offered align with the goals of employment. Partnerships with youth serving organizations needs to be strengthened in the Easter and Southwestern Regions.

9. **Follow-up Services** - Youth providers are required to conduct follow up with youth. Follow up includes one-on-one review of employment/training status, advocacy with employers and training/educational institutions, as well as feedback/survey from youth about services and supports. Strategies to be explored include increased partnership with youth to inform additional follow-up services needed to increase overall success, i.e., "Let's ask youth what works best!" The NMDWS Youth Engagement Team monitors this closely and has been providing on-going technical assistance to strengthen efforts.
10. **Comprehensive guidance and counseling** - Youth providing agencies currently have youth specialists available to meet with youth one-on-one. This service includes assessment, career exploration and guidance, and one-on-one support. NMDWS also provides two on-line tools and a curriculum to strengthen these efforts. Career Solutions and Why I Work, on-line tools guide youth through career exploration, labor market information, financial literacy and career pathway planning. The tools have proven to be valuable for career guidance and counseling.
11. **Financial literacy education** - Youth providing agencies utilize the FDIC's Money Smart Program® that includes curriculum modules on banking and financial goal setting. They also utilize the "Why I Work" on-line tool to help youth link career pathway with future financial goals and spending.
12. **Entrepreneurial skills training** - Youth providers have access to Small Business Development Centers to provide low cost training and consultation. Strategies for improvement include expanding partnerships with mentioned agencies to link students with small business owners for mentorship and job shadowing to create greater awareness of the small business development.
13. **Services that provide labor market and employment information about in demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area;** - This service is foundational for all the local boards. Each board is required to review current labor and employer needs, and to understand what occupations are needed in the local area. All local boards currently are engaged in development of summer and seasonal employment opportunities available for youth. Strategies to be explored include developing information specific to youth employment and beginning to understand what occupations are available specifically for youth, specifically in relationship to internships and registers apprenticeships. Youth Providers are utilizing an on-line tools customized for youth called Career Solutions and Why I Work – both tools provide easy to understand concepts about labor market information and how to link with career pathway plans.
14. **Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training** - Youth providing agencies currently have youth specialists available to meet with youth. Their services include assessment, career exploration and guidance, as well as group and one-on-one training on postsecondary education and training preparedness. Youth specialists are also linked to postsecondary institutions, receiving updates on registration/eligibility requirements. Strategies to be explored includes, review of postsecondary and training partnerships to understand challenges and barriers experienced by youth - use information to drive tra

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.

State Definitions:

“Requires additional assistance to complete and educational program, or to secure and hold employment” - Because the State has chosen not to define “additional assistance” as it relates to WIOA Youth program eligibility, each local board has the responsibility for determining its own definition of this eligibility category. If a local board wishes to use this eligibility category, a local policy must be developed that specifies what conditions must be met for a youth to require additional assistance and what documentation is needed to demonstrate this eligibility category. In each local area, not more than five percent of the in- school youth under WIOA Section 129(3) (B) may be eligible under “individual who requires additional assistance” to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

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).)

Not Applicable

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

Not applicable

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

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 Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
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

The State Plan must include	Include
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;	Yes
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
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

ADULT 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.5%	81.0%	76.5%	81.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.2%	80.0%	76.2%	80.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,200	\$9,600	\$8,200	\$9,600

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	70.0%	65.5%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.6%	70.5%	63.6%	70.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

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The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

DISLOCATED 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	70.4%	73.5%	70.4%	73.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	71.5%	73.5%	71.5%	73.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$7,850	\$8,898	\$7,850	\$8,898
Credential Attainment Rate	61.0%	68.5%	61.0%	68.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	75.5%	64.0%	75.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

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The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

YOUTH 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	70.0%	66.0%	70.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	73.5%	66.0%	73.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3,800	\$4,855	\$3,800	\$4,855
Credential Attainment Rate	52.0%	52.0%	52.0%	52.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	51.0%	55.0%	51.0%	55.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

**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.

In New Mexico all staff administering Wagner Peyser will be state merit staff.

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

All Area managers (DWS specific) and staff are required to take two trainings monthly on issues related to career pathway development for job seekers, labor market needs to focus on employer's needs, individual professional development and training on various partnerships with other agencies. Additionally, all staff are required to develop on the use of auditing and case management of clients.

NMDWS will designate professional dates throughout the year, providing additional training to Wagner-Peyser staff at One-Stop Centers.

Upon hire, all new staff are required to go through a 6-week onboarding process in central office provided by the centralized training department which prepares them to begin to understand their role in the public workforce system. Training continues throughout their first year in their designated office. All training is vetted annually with input both from leadership and local office staff for relevance and quality.

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

Quarterly Meetings with NMDWS staff and all partners located within the one stop centers, to discuss partnership needs to focus on participants needing orientation and training to educate them on benefits and programs to remove participants prior to UI benefits being exhausted.

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

When New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions staff encounter a Limited English Proficient (LEP) customer, they must use an in-person or telephone interpreter. If needed, designated NMDWS bilingual staff may be used as interpreters. The Department has contracts in place for language interpretation and translation services for LEP customers. Language Identification Cards are posted at reception desks in all New Mexico Workforce Connection Centers where an interpreter may be contacted right away for seamless delivery of service.

The Department is in the process of updating and implementing a Bable Notice as part of the agency's Language Access Plan. The notice will be attached to all vital information sent regarding Unemployment Insurance. The notice will include the top 20 languages for the state of New Mexico. Text in the notice will be as follows, "IMPORTANT! This document contains important information about your rights, responsibilities and/or benefits. It is critical that you understand the information in this document. If you don't speak English, language assistance services are available to you free of charge. Call the toll-free number 1-877-664-6984."

For further assistance that falls outside of the scope of the Workforce Connection Centers, staff assist customers with contacting the UI Operations Center, either via direct phone line or electronically.

Outreach Material and Communication Tools

NMDWS launched the "What You Should Know about UI" video and information series on the main NMDWS website and the NMDWS YouTube channel, and is accessible to NMDWS employees and partner staff in the Workforce Connection Centers. "What You Should Know About UI" includes several topic areas for both individuals receiving benefits and employers paying Unemployment Insurance taxes in New Mexico. In addition to the information available on each of the pages, each topic area includes a short video. Spanish versions are available for select videos.

- 10 Things
- Minimize UI Taxes
- UI Fraud
- Common Mistakes o Search for Work
- UI Taxes
- Appeals
- Login UI System
- Login UI System (Spanish)

On the NMDWS main website (www.dws.state.nm.us), "How Do I" questions are available for individuals filing or certifying for benefits. These FAQs cover information from filing for benefits to the callback features on the 1-877-664-6984 toll-free number for the UI Operations Center.

In order to provide robust information to individuals interacting with Workforce Connection Center and partner staff, various publications are designed, routinely updated, and printed, and then provided to all Workforce Connection Centers, local staff, and partners around the state. NMDWS has been diligent over the last year to provide all UI publications in English and

Spanish, and in print as well as in PDF on various websites including www.dws.state.nm.us and www.jobs.state.nm.us. These publications include: The UI Handbook; "UI Program Overview" brochure; "UI Quick Facts;" and various additional information about logging into the UI Tax and Claims system and work search requirements.

Filing a Claim

Customers who want to file a claim and who come into the local Workforce Connection Centers are assisted with general information, then provided with direct access to an onsite computer and/or direct telephone line to file the claim.

Staff is currently asked to keep this information generic due to the potential complexities of each customer situation and the desire to avoid inconsistencies and errors.

NMDWS has a centralized UI customer interface to ensure consistency and has found that this is a more effective approach.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA)

As part of the RESEA program described in the previous section:

- Staff has access to the UI system to review each customer's electronically submitted work search activities.
- Staff report, on a daily basis, all RESEA UI-related activity to the central UI Operations Center for purposes of creating and adjudicating eligibility issues.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

If an unemployment insurance claimant is required to register and seek work, the claimant must have an active job seeker account while receiving UI benefits or appealing a determination. Job seekers self-register by completing the online application on the internet-based Workforce Connection Online System or can register in person in a Workforce Connection Center. Workforce Connection Centers generally provide public-access to computers for online self-registration, and staff-assisted registration.

This background information in the job seeker's account serves as the foundation for resumes; advertisement of job seeker skills and experience to employers; assists staff in performing a good match when connecting job seekers to job listings; and positions the job seeker to take advantage of the full functionality of the Workforce Connection Online System.

The UI claimant must meet the following criteria.

- Able - means the claimant must be able to perform suitable work.
- Available - means the claimant must be ready and willing to accept suitable work if a job is available.
- Actively Seeking Work - means claimant must be actively looking for work.
- Claimants are required to certify that they meet the three criteria above weekly by phone or internet.

- Claimants must keep a written record of all contacts for audit purposes.

Employment Service staff assist UI claimants with their work search and ensure the following:

- UI claimants receive the full range of employment services available to facilitate their earliest return to work, including referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources; and
- UI claimants requiring assistance in seeking work receive the necessary guidance and counseling to ensure they make a meaningful and realistic work search.

UI claimants and employers can request to use Workforce Connection Center equipment to address matters related to their UI claims, including appeals, without providing specific information on the claim. Workforce Connection Centers must ensure that UI claimants and employers have access to resources and assistance at all times during a Workforce Connection Center's regular business hours, including access to telephones, computers, fax machines, and a location in which to participate in a UI telephone appeal hearing, if needed.

UI plays a significant role in supporting the reemployment of claimants. The workforce system connects skilled workers with employers who need them, and UI claimants have recent attachment to the workforce, making them a significant part of the available labor pool. Reemployment assistance also includes a focus on military veterans receiving unemployment compensation for ex-service member (UCX) compensation. Military veteran claimants under the UCX program are given priority of service.

WIOA designates the state UI program as a required one-stop partner. As such, local areas have included UI as a required partner in their Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the local boards, the Chief Elected Official, and the one-stop partners that address the operation of the one-stop delivery system. This arrangement facilitates UI claimants' access the full range of Workforce Connection Center services both online and in-person. Employment Services staff provides reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals through its Rapid Response and RESEA programs to help ensure these individuals are searching for and registering for work, and participating in reemployment services.

Rapid Response

As discussed earlier, Rapid Response teams provide services to employers and workers in mass layoff situations and conduct claims filing activities, when needed. Rapid Response staff serves as a key point of contact for businesses and are also used to educate employers about layoff aversion strategies.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment

Employment Services staff also connect UI claimants to reemployment services through RESEA. The State identifies UI claimants who are most likely to exhaust their benefits and need job search assistance to return to work, and refer them to reemployment services. Through RESEA, New Mexico is able to focus on the reemployment of these individuals. Through RESEA, the State strives to reduce the number of customers who exhaust unemployment benefits through individualized and targeted employment services and counseling, as well as referrals to training.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P 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;

If an unemployment insurance claimant is required to register and seek work, the claimant must have an active job seeker account while receiving UI benefits or appealing a determination. Job seekers self-register by completing the online application on the internet-based Workforce Connection Online System or can register in person in a Workforce Connection Center. Workforce Connection Centers generally provide public-access to computers for online self-registration, and staff-assisted registration.

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compensation for ex-service member (UCX) compensation. Military veteran claimants under the UCX program are given priority of service.

WIOA designates the state UI program as a required one-stop partner. As such, local areas have included UI as a required partner in their Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the local boards, the Chief Elected Official, and the one-stop partners that address the operation of the one-stop delivery system. This arrangement facilitates UI claimants' access the full range of Workforce Connection Center services both online and in-person. Employment Services staff provides reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals through its Rapid Response and RESEA programs to help ensure these individuals are searching for and registering for work, and participating in reemployment services.

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2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

If an unemployment insurance claimant is required to register and seek work, the claimant must have an active job seeker account while receiving UI benefits or appealing a determination. Job seekers self-register by completing the online application in the internet-based Workforce Connection Online System or can register in person in a Workforce Connection Center. Workforce Connection Centers generally provide public-access to computers for online self- registration, and staff-assisted registration.

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to help ensure these individuals are searching for and registering for work, and participating in reemployment services.

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

If an unemployment insurance claimant is required to register and seek work, the claimant must have an active job seeker account while receiving UI benefits or appealing a determination. Job seekers self-register by completing the online application in the internet-based Workforce Connection Online System or can register in person in a Workforce Connection Center. Workforce Connection Centers generally provide public-access computers for online self- registration, and staff-assisted registration.

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4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Employment Services are provided as part of the one-stop delivery system. Currently, each local workforce development area has at least one comprehensive workforce development center that includes, at a minimum, three partners: WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, Wagner- Peyser Employment Services, and access to Unemployment Insurance services. Each Employment Services field office is assigned a site manager who ensures the workforce centers are universally accessible, customer centered, and training is job-driven. This includes providing easy access to and assistance with workforce related activities, such as looking for a job, exploring work preparation and career development services, as well as seamless referral to WIOA employment, on-the-job-training, and occupational training programs. Employment Services staff follow required guidelines regarding referral and placement.

All of the Basic Career Services offered by the WIOA programs must be made available by Wagner- Peyser staff in coordination with other one-stop partners. Employment Services staff may also make available the Individualized Career Services, particularly for those individuals with barriers. Wagner-Peyser services are free of charge for individuals. Employment Services staff work cooperatively and collaboratively with the Local Workforce Development Boards, site managers and operators, and other workforce partners, to effectively serve both employers and jobseekers. A key role of this program is to identify potential matches between employers and jobseekers. The program's service delivery approach includes self-service, facilitated self-help, and staff-assisted services, and involves a number of other tools and resources as follows.

Worker and Jobseeker Services:

- Work and Skills assessments
- Career pathway development
- Labor Market information
- Workshop and training referrals
- Reemployment services to unemployment insurance claimants
- Job referral assistance
- Assisting in the navigation of the Workforce Connection On-Line system

The New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System is available free of charge to employers and jobseekers. Employers can post their own jobs or provide job listing information to Workforce Connection Center staff for the matching and referral of qualified job seekers. Workforce Connection Center staff can access both employer job listings and job seeker accounts entered into the system. The job listing information allows Workforce Connection Center staff to evaluate the hiring requirements of the employer, as well as the qualifications of the job seeker. NMCOS Services for jobseekers include:

- online self-registration,
- resume creation,
- online job matching,
- ability to browse jobs and contact employers immediately,
- e-mail notification of matches, if requested,
- current labor market information,
- access to career tools and training resources,
- access to job notices from external job listings, and
- access labor market information.

Employment Services staff also connect UI claimants to reemployment services through RESEA. Through RESEA, New Mexico is able to focus on the reemployment of these individuals. Through RESEA, the State strives to reduce the number of customers who exhaust unemployment benefits through individualized and targeted employment services and counseling, as well as referrals to 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. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES 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.

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.

The state of NM is home to 25,044 farms and ranches. There are 14,979 women producers and a total of 40.6 million acres of farmland. The top five labor-intensive crops in the state of New Mexico are:

Crops	Months of Heavy Activity	Geographic Area
Pecans	November- January	Luna, Dona Ana, Chaves, & Eddy Counties
Hay- Alfalfa/ Sorghum	April - October	Luna, Dona Ana, Chaves, & Eddy Counties
Onions	May- July	Luna & Dona Ana Counties
Chile	July- October	Luna, Dona Ana, Sierra, & Chaves Counties
Cotton	November - December	Luna, Dona Ana, Sierra, Otero, Eddy & Curry Counties

In the Southern part of the state, there continues to be a high demand for farmworkers due to the planting of labor-intensive crops. During the peak season, most employers hire local seasonal farmworkers and migrant workers. Migrant and seasonal workers travel from Mexico and cross the port of entry from El Paso, TX and Columbus, NM. These workers are then transported to the Southern part of the state to meet the growers' demands. Migrant workers also come from AZ, CA, CO, and TX but these numbers are decreasing every year. Many years ago, migrant workers came with their families to clip onions but that is no longer the case. Employers are reporting a decline in the farmworker workforce and are relying to H2A program to meet the labor demands.

This year the H2A program increased approximately 65% in the Dona Ana and Luna County area. However, growers and contractors are struggling to find housing that meets USDOL regulations. For the past years, the decline in farmworker workforce has been affecting the production of some agricultural commodities in the state. In the past, growers planted up to 90 acres of chile or more, but in recent years the acreage has shrunk to 20-40 acres. Last year, most growers were able to do a second picking of green chile. This year, due to the long heat wave, the chile is turning red faster than normal, chile is thin, and tips are burned. Mexico is taking over growing red chile at a lot cheaper price, leading growers to reduce their crops.

In the past few years there is a higher market for onions, so growers are planting more onions in Southern New Mexico. In the past two years due to the decline of the workforce, most growers are planting pecans trees because it requires less workforce. In Hatch, drought has led to low surface water availability, and growers are resorting to pumping water from the ground, which releases minerals that affect the soil. One of the harmful minerals that does not allow the crops to grow is salt. As of today, many weather factors affect the crops, growers, farm labor contractors, and farmworkers.

It is difficult for farmworkers to find other types of employment due to language, education, and cultural barriers. Farmworkers need a lot of assistance finding and securing employment. New Mexico farmworkers predominately speak Spanish; therefore, they need English Language Learner (ELL) courses and High School Equivalency completion. In New Mexico, farmworkers continue to struggle to secure adequate and affordable housing. Also, poor credit and low income affects the farmworker community from acquiring and securing proper housing.

New Mexico farmworker employment declined because of multiple factors, such as underlying health issues higher paying employment opportunities in the oil field, construction and mining industries, and retirements. The children of farmworkers are not interested in farmworker activities, are receiving higher education, and are looking for better paying jobs. In addition, farmers are relying on technology, automation, and the export of goods from Mexico.

An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means: 1) identifying 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) Identifying 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. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING 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) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

We utilized data from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the annual New Mexico Agricultural Statistics. The data published by these agencies are the primary sources of information for the MSFW needs assessment and identify labor-intensive agricultural crops throughout the state, including timelines for crops, and peak period dates by county.

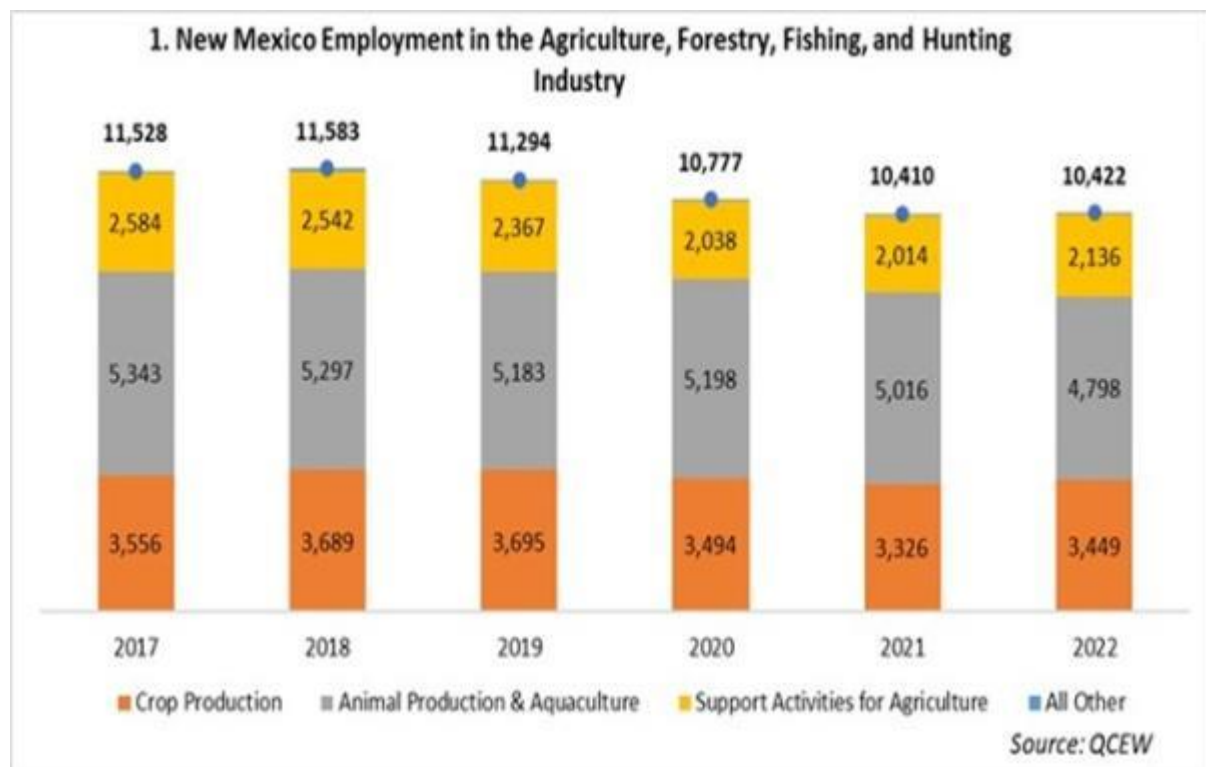
Several sources gather information on employment in agriculture operations, including: the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), the USDA's Census of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). BEA employment estimates include full-time and part-time workers, but BEA data does not include a complete count of all migrants, undocumented or seasonal workers.

In New Mexico, the top five labor intensive crops are as follows: Dairy products, cattle & livestock, hay, pecans, chile and onions. Dairy products are a year-round industry in the eastern part of the state. Cattle and livestock are a year-round industry with seasonal workers that work during April – August during the branding season. A majority of the ranchers are located in the eastern part of the state and have close to one million head of cattle and 30,000 sheep. In the northern part of the state there are approximately 29,000 sheep. The highest producing regions for hay are the eastern and northern part of the state. The eastern region grows 46,000 acres of hay, while the northern region harvests 34,000 acres during the months of late April to October. Pecans are grown in the southwest and are harvested from mid-December to mid-February. Sixty-seven million pounds of pecans are harvested from 34,319 acres. In 2020, 6,000 acres of chile were planted in the southern area, and the peak season is during mid-July until mid-October depending on the weather. There were over 7,000 acres of onions planted and harvested during Mid-May to August.

Dairy and the cattle industry are the most important agricultural activities in New Mexico, with dairy constituting 39% and cattle constituting 37% state agricultural revenue. Pecans rank second behind hay, producing 4% of the state's agricultural revenue. Onion and chile are 2% of state agricultural revenue. New Mexico's chile and pecan production rank second in the nation and onions rank fifth in the nation.

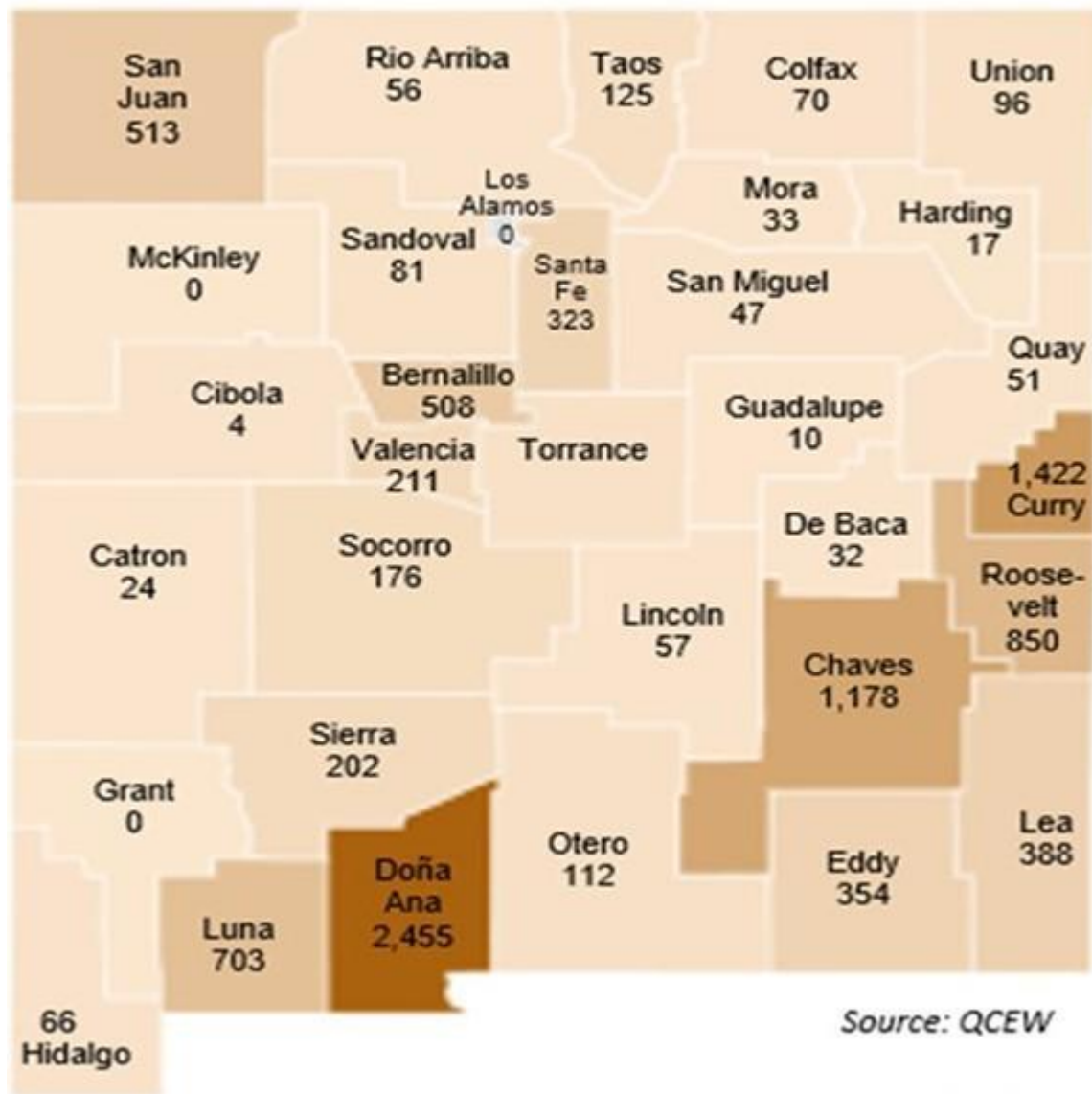
Agricultural employers statewide are struggling to find local workers and are not able to harvest their crops. Therefore, employers are turning to the H2A program to meet their needs. In 2022, there were 1,944 H2A workers and currently in 2023 the number of H2A workers is at 2,260. Weather, drought, and lack of workforce have affected the harvest of the crops for the past few years.

In 2022, 10,422 New Mexican workers were employed in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industry (Exhibit 1). About 46 percent worked in the subcategory of animal production and aquaculture, while about one in three workers were employed in crop production. Since 2017, the total number of workers in the agriculture industry has dropped 9.6 percent, or 1,106. (Please note that these figures include only workers who are covered under Unemployment Insurance Laws, which may not include all migrants, undocumented, or seasonal workers).



Nearly 24 percent of all New Mexico agricultural workers were employed in Doña Ana County (Exhibit 2). The New Mexico counties with the next highest number of agricultural workers were Curry County (1,422, or 13.8 percent of the statewide total) followed by Chaves County (1,178, or 11.4 percent of the statewide total)

2. Employment in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting Industry, by County, 2022



As seen in Exhibit 3, Doña Ana County had the highest number of workers in crop production (1,214) and support activities (979), while Curry County had the highest employment in animal production and aquaculture (1,267). Chaves County also had high employment in animal production and aquaculture, employing 896 in 2022.

3. Employment in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting Industry, by County, 2022

New Mexico County	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (NAICS 11)	Crop Production (NAICS 111)	Animal Production and Aquaculture (NAICS 112)	Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry (NAICS 115)
Bernalillo	508	384	49	75
Catron	24	***	14	***
Chaves	1,178	248	896	***
Cibola	47	***	***	***
Colfax	70	***	70	***
Curry	1,422	43	1,267	112
De Baca	32	***	25	***
Doña Ana	2,455	1,214	263	979
Eddy	354	180	88	86
Grant	***	***	26	***
Guadalupe	10	***	***	***
Harding	17		***	***
Hidalgo	66	43	***	***
Lea	388	***	354	***
Lincoln	57	***	46	***
Los Alamos	-	-	-	-
Luna	703	142	231	330
McKinley	***	***	***	***
Mora	33	***	27	***
Otero	112	84	***	***
Quay	51	***	34	***
Rio Arriba	56	16	***	25
Roosevelt	850	24	788	39
San Juan	513	440	***	54
San Miguel	47	***	40	***
Sandoval	81	75	***	***
Santa Fe	323	152	96	***
Sierra	202	98	***	77
Socorro	176	***	171	***
Taos	125	***	15	96
Torrance	85	66	***	***
Union	96	***	42	***
Valencia	211	106	***	***

*Data for Forestry and logging (NAICS 113) and Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping (NAICS 114) are not included in this table. *** Confidential. Source: QCEW*

Packers and packagers (hand) was the occupation with the greatest number of workers (2,160), but this figure includes workers in all industries, not just agriculture (Exhibit 4). Farmworkers and laborers for crops, nurseries, and greenhouses were 1,900 in 2022. Besides forest and conservation workers, these two occupations had the lowest average hourly earnings in 2022.

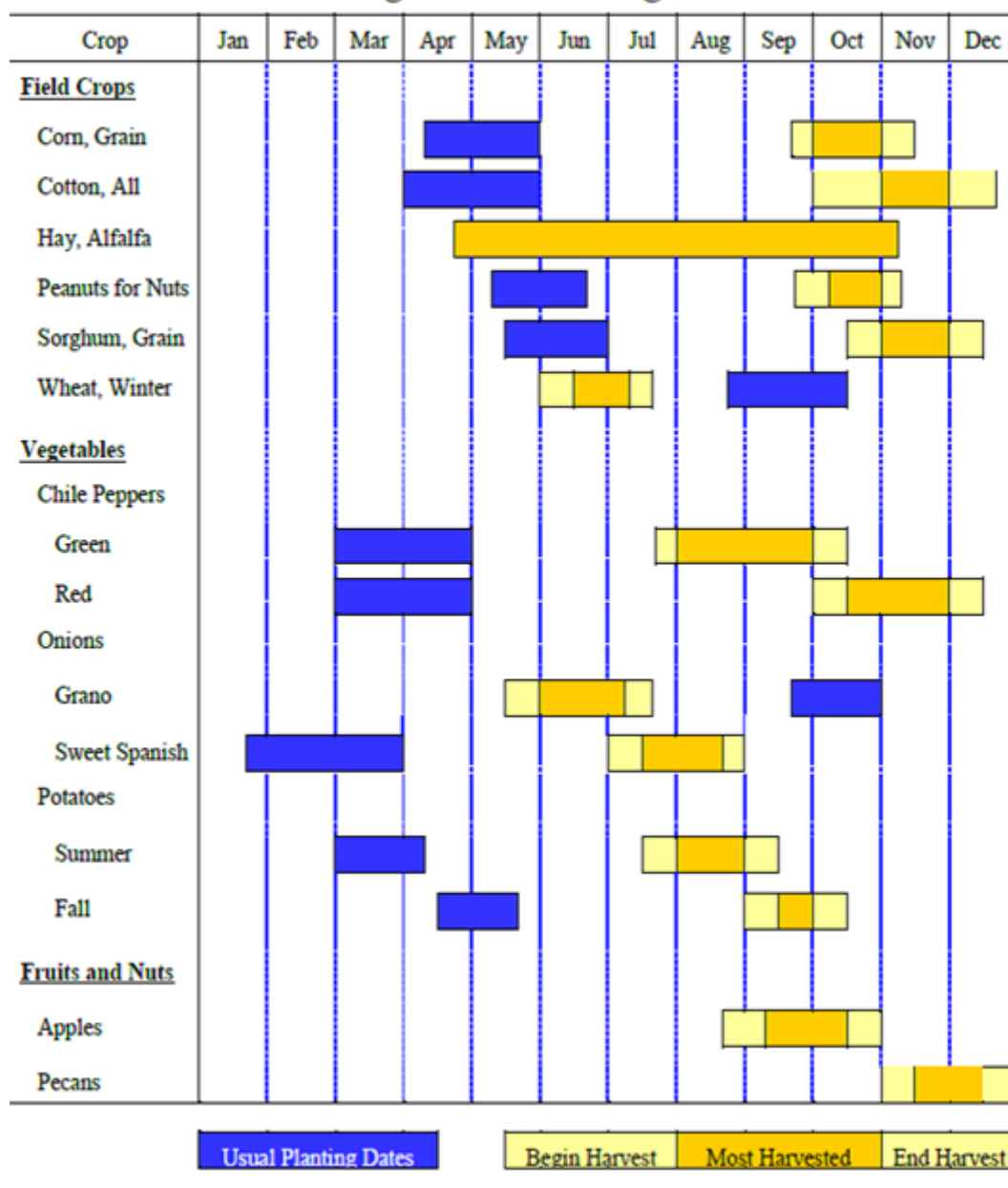
Packers and packagers (hand) earned \$13.84 per hour and farmworkers and laborers earned \$13.59 per hour, about half that of the statewide average of \$26.15 an hour.

4. Employment and Wages of Agricultural Occupations in New Mexico, 2022				
SOC code	SOC Title	Total Employment	Average Hourly	Average Annual
TOTAL		818,800	\$26.15	\$54,400
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand (all industries)	2,160	\$13.84	\$28,790
45-2092	Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, Greenhouse	1,900	\$13.59	\$28,260
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	410	\$16.61	\$34,550
45-1011	Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers	240	\$21.74	\$45,220
25-9021	Farm and Home Management Educators	220	\$32.34	\$67,260
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	150	\$15.03	\$31,270
45-2011	Agricultural Inspectors	140	\$20.03	\$41,650
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics & Service Technicians	130	\$21.07	\$43,820
45-4011	Forest and Conservation Workers	50	\$12.22	\$25,410

Source: OEWS

The following tables summarize the previous program year's agricultural crop activities, indicating each major MSFW labor intensive agricultural crop, the months of activities for each crop, and activities by county.

Planting and Harvesting Dates



Miscellaneous Crops and Livestock – New Mexico 2017 Census of Agriculture

Crop	Farms	Acres Harvested	Principal Counties
Apples	832	1,153	Lincoln, Otero, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe
Apricots	339	103	Doña Ana, Otero, Rio Arriba
Cantaloupe	162	101	Doña Ana, San Juan, Sandoval

Crop	Farms	Acres Harvested	Principal Counties
Cherries (Sweet)	248	82	Mora, Otero, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe
Cucumbers	281	68	Rio Arriba, San Juan
Grapes	376	1,280	Not published
Lettuce	184	828	Doña Ana
Nursery Crops	85	2,340	Not published
Oats	13	452	Mora, Rio Arriba, Sandoval
Peaches	442	153	Bernalillo, Doña Ana, Rio Arriba, Valencia
Pears	335	100	Bernalillo, Lincoln, Rio Arriba, Taos
Pistachios	89	571	Not published
Pumpkins	143	2,223	Not published
Snap Beans	182	58	Luna, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe
Squash	564	441	McKinley, San Juan
Sweet Corn	306	657	Rio Arriba, Roosevelt, Sandoval, San Juan
Tomatoes	416	133	Bernalillo, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe
Watermelons	367	1,503	Not published
Livestock	Farms	Head	Principal Counties
Bison	23	4,942	Not published
Ducks	402	6,397	Not published
Geese	251	3,481	Not published
Horses	8,883	43,366	Doña Ana, McKinley, Rio Arriba, San Juan
Llamas and Alpacas	133	1,081	Bernalillo, Santa Fe
Mules, Burros, and Donkeys	1,092	2,305	Colfax, McKinley, San Juan, Valencia

Crop	Farms	Acres Harvested	Principal Counties
Turkeys	351	11,099	Not published

(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

County Estimates – New Mexico: 2019 Livestock Inventory, 2018 Crop Production

All data is from New Mexico Annual Bulletin 2018 USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Census 2017		Bernalillo County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	1,248			Cattle & Calves		(D)
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg. Size	221,495			Beef Cows		1,700
of Farm Value of Products Sold	177			Milk Cows		(D)
	\$9,317,000			Sheep & Lambs		1,600
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$7,466					
Avg. Farm Expenses Avg. Net	\$13,641					
Farm Income	-\$3,827	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay Alfalfa	1,500	3.95	5,900	Tons

Census 2017		Catron County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	341			Cattle & Calves	Beef Cows	23,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,260,711			Sheep & Lambs		16,500
Avg. Size of Farm	3,697					300
Value of Products Sold	\$9,471,000					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$27,774					
Avg. Farm Expenses Avg. Net	\$36,194					
Farm Income	\$3,060	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Chaves County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms Land in560				attle & Calves Beef <u>Cows</u> Milk		190,000
Farms (Acres) Avg. Size of2,318,413				Cows		36,500
Farm4,140				Sheep & Lambs		79,000
						18,900
Value of Products Sold	\$404,515,000					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$722,348					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$637,933					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$99,403	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Cibola County	Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head	
Number of Farms	640		Cattle & Calves		14,900	
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,593,679		Beef Cows		10,200	
Avg. Size of Farm	2,490		Sheep & Lambs		3,000	
Value of Products Sold	(D)					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	(D)					
Avg. Farm Expenses	(D)					
Avg. Net Farm Income	(D)					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

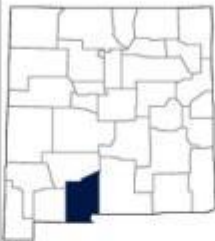
(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

Census 2017		Colfax County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	304			Cattle & Calves		28,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	2,073,125			Beef Cows		16,500
Avg. Size of Farm	6,819			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$25,093,000			Sheep & Lambs		100
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$82,542					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$64,337					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$40,567					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Curry County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	641			Cattle & Calves		275,000
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg.	902,165			Beef Cows		12,100
Size of Farm Value of	1,407			Milk Cows		85,000
Products Sold	\$480,580,000			Sheep & Lambs		500
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$749,735					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$688,859					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$94,790					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Other	15,600	1.40	21,800	Tons

Census 2017		De Baca County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	226			Cattle & Calves	37,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,182,224			Beef Cows	18,300
Avg. Size of Farm	5,230			Sheep & Lambs	1,000
Value of Products Sold	Avg. \$28,135,000				
Farm Value Sold	\$124,490				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$113,458				
Avg. Net Farm Income	(D)	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production
		Hay, Alfalfa	5,800	4.70	27,400
		Hay, Other	1,100	2.85	3,150
				Unit	
				Tons	
				Tons	

(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

Census 2017		Doña Ana County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	1,946			Cattle & Calves	66,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	Avg. 528,270			Beef Cows	7,800
Size of Farm Value of	270			Milk Cows	30,000
Products Sold	\$370,292,000			Sheep & Lambs	1,100
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$190,284				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$153,147				
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$41,662	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production
		Chile	2,100	258	542,000
		Cotton Upland	4,500	1,792 ¹	16,800
		Hay, Alfalfa	8,000	7.70	61,700
				Unit	
				Cwt	
				Bales	
				Tons	

¹ Cotton Yields are measured in pounds per acre.

Census 2017		Eddy County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	507			Cattle & Calves		39,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,087,902			Beef Cows		16,600
Avg. Size of Farm	2,146			Milk Cows		8,400
Value of Products Sold	\$97,278,000			Sheep & Lambs		900
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$191,869					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$154,450					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$40,826	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Cotton, Upland	4,700	1,328 ¹	13,000	Bales
		Hay, Alfalfa	20,500	4.95	101,200	Tons
		Hay, Other	2,000	2.90	5,800	Tons

Cotton Yields are measured in pounds per acre.

Census 2017		Grant County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	404			Cattle & Calves		26,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,077,324			Beef Cows		19,300
Avg. Size of Farm	2,213			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$14,748,000			Sheep & Lambs		(D)
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$36,506					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$34,388					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$8,213	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Guadalupe County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	297			Cattle & Calves	24,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,444,135			Beef Cows	15,000
Avg. Size of Farm Value of	4,862			Milk Cows	(D)
Products Sold	\$13,260,000			Sheep & Lambs	2,000
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$44,645				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$50,850				
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$2,093				
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production

Census 2017		Harding County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	184			Cattle & Calves	22,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	938,460			Beef Cows	(D)
Avg. Size of Farm	5,100			Sheep & Lambs	(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$13,442,000				
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$73,056				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$83,211				
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$-938				
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production

Census 2017		Hidalgo County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	151			Cattle & Calves	22,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	848,867			Beef Cows	14,400
Avg. Size of Farm	5,622			Sheep & Lambs	(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$23,420,000				
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$155,097				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$119,099				
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$49,345				
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production
		Hay, Alfalfa	1,700	5.75	9,800
					Tons

Census 2017		Lea County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	555			Cattle & Calves	95,000	
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg.	1,938,321			Beef Cows	24,000	
Size of Farm Value of	3,492			Milk Cows	32,000	
Products Sold	\$192,242,000			Sheep & Lambs	2,800	
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$346,383					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$311,551					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$42,205					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Cotton, Upland	21,000	773 ¹	33,800	Bales

¹ Cotton Yields are measured in pounds per acre.

Census 2017		Lincoln County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	454			Cattle & Calves		31,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,466,477			Beef Cows		21,500
Avg. Size of Farm	3,230			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$15,858,000			Sheep & Lambs		1,700
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$34,930					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$40,630					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$626					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Luna County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	211			Cattle & Calves		26,500
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg.	575,844			Beef Cows		(D)
Size of Farm Value of	2,729			Milk Cows		(D)
Products Sold	\$79,278,000			Sheep & Lambs		300
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$375,726					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$340,380					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$56,399					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Chile	2,700	192	518,000	Cwt
		Hay, Alfalfa	3,200	6.80	21,800	Tons
		Hay, Other	2,000	4.40	5,300	Tons

Census 2017		McKinley County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	2,441			Cattle & Calves	22,000	
Land in Farms (Acres)	2,569,810			Beef Cows	12,300	
Avg. Size of Farm	1,053			Milk Cows	(D)	
Value of Products Sold	\$8,139,000			Sheep & Lambs	26,500	
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$3,334					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$8,436					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$4,802	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Mora County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	700			Cattle & Calves		18,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	930,642			Beef Cows		9,900
Avg. Size of Farm Value of 1,329				Milk Cows		(D)
Products Sold	\$18,152,000			Sheep & Lambs		400
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$25,931					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$19,505					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$9,256					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	2,600	1.35	3,500	Tons
		Hay, Other	1,500	1.55	2,350	Tons

Census 2017		Otero County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	473			Cattle & Calves		16,200
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,019,246			Beef Cows		11,200
Avg. Size of Farm	2,155			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$18,160,000			Sheep & Lambs		400
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$38,394					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$38,132					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$3,823					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Quay County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	613			Cattle & Calves		40,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,548,435			Beef Cows		(D)
Avg. Size of Farm	2,526			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$39,469,000			Sheep & Lambs		700
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$64,387					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$67,473					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$13,052	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	2,000	2.90	5,800	Tons
		Hay, Other	4,900	2.90	14,200	Tons

Census 2017		Rio Arriba County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	1,439			Cattle & Calves		16,800
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,362,062			Beef Cows		(D)
Avg. Size of Farm	947			Sheep & Lambs		5,100
Value of Products Sold	\$14,637,000					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$10,172					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$14,252					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$207	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		Roosevelt County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	742			Cattle & Calves		145,000
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg.	1,499,615			Beef Cows		23,000
Size of Farm Value of	2,021			Milk Cows		55,000
Products Sold	\$290,641,000			Sheep & Lambs		1,000
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$391,699					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$345,383					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$68,059	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Cotton, Upland	6,500	775 ¹	10,500	Bales
		Hay, Alfalfa	2,100	7.05	14,800	Tons
		Hay, Other	19,800	1.75	34,900	Tons

Census 2017		Sandoval County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	1,007			Cattle & Calves	12,000	
Land in Farms (Acres)	787,724			Beef Cows	7,400	
Avg. Size of Farm	778			Milk Cows	(D)	
Value of Products Sold	\$12,372,000			Sheep & Lambs	2,300	
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$12,286					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$14,400					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$513					
		Crops 2017	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit

Census 2017		San Juan County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	2,965			Cattle & Calves		16,300
Land in Farms (Acres)	2,551,470			Beef Cows		10,100
Avg. Size of Farm	861			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$74,118,000			Sheep & Lambs		21,000
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$24,998					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$27,958					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$865	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	34,000	5.20	177,200	Tons

Census 2017		San Miguel County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	1,170			Cattle & Calves		45,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	2,269,554			Beef Cows		24,000
Avg. Size of Farm	1,940			Milk Cows		(D)
Value of Products Sold	\$19,098,000			Sheep & Lambs		200
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$16,323					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$20,384					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$1,956	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Other	5,300	0.75	4,000	Tons

Census 2017		Santa Fe County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	639			Cattle & Calves		15,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	(D)			Beef Cows		9,600
Avg. Size of Farm	(D)			Sheep & Lambs		900
Value of Products Sold	\$25,431,000					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$39,798					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$47,305					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$5,452					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	2,600	5.00	13,000	Tons

(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operation.

Census 2017		Sierra County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	257			Cattle & Calves		20,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,012,233			Beef Cows		(D)
Avg. Size of Farm Value of	3,939			Milk Cows		(D)
Products Sold	\$31,892,000			Sheep & Lambs		100
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$123,093					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$127,748					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$2,509					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Chile	800	209	166,800	Cwt
		Hay, Alfalfa	3,200	6.80	21,700	Tons

Census 2017		Socorro County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	658			Cattle & Calves	42,000	
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg. Size	912,476			Beef Cows	14,600	
of Farm Value of Products Sold	1,387			Milk Cows	12,000	
	\$65,148,000			Sheep & Lambs	2,000	
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$99,009					
1. Avg. Farm Expenses	\$90,197					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$11,067	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	5,200	5.20	27,100	Tons
		Hay, Other	1,200	2.50	3,000	Tons

Census 2017		Taos County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	824			Cattle & Calves	5,200	
Land in Farms (Acres)	285,130			Beef Cows	(D)	
Avg. Size of Farm	346			Sheep & Lambs	1,500	
Value of Products Sold	\$7,634,000					
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$9,265					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$12,464					
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$2,211	Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	8,400	0.90	7,700	Tons
		Hay, Other	1,200	1.15	1,350	Tons

Census 2017		Torrance County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	716			Cattle & Calves		38,500
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,561,057			Beef Cows		(D)
Avg. Size of Farm Value of	2,181			Milk Cows		(D)
Products Sold	\$45,893,000			Sheep & Lambs		1,800
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$64,096					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$63,035					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$6,415					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	5,700	5.00	28,600	Tons
		Hay, Other	2,900	2.90	8,400	Tons

Census 2017		Union County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019		Head
Number of Farms	369			Cattle & Calves		78,000
Land in Farms (Acres)	1,886,887			Beef Cows		29,500
Avg. Size of Farm Value of	5,114			Milk Cows		(D)
Products Sold	\$83,134,000			Sheep & Lambs		100
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$225,297					
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$208,600					
Avg. Net Farm Income	\$35,103					
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production	Unit
		Hay, Alfalfa	800	5.25	4,200	Tons
		Hay, Other	2,600	1.00	2,600	Tons

Census 2017		Valencia County		Livestock – Jan 1, 2019	
Number of Farms	1,360			Cattle & Calves	24,000
Land in Farms (Acres) Avg.	517,702			Beef Cows	6,300
Size of Farm Value of	381			Milk Cows	8,500
Products Sold	\$46,085,000			Sheep & Lambs	1,400
Avg. Farm Value Sold	\$33,886				
Avg. Farm Expenses	\$38,606				
Avg. Net Farm Income	-\$3,516				
		Crops 2018	Acres Harv.	Yield	Production
		Hay, Alfalfa	7,800	4.80	37,400
					Unit
					Tons

New Mexico Annual Bulletin 2018 USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS 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

According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, as of 2018, there were an estimated 28,687 agricultural workers in the state of New Mexico; 74.1 percent were proprietors (21,243). A large concentration of proprietors is unique to the agricultural industry. Nonfarm industries represented only 20.1 percent of proprietors.

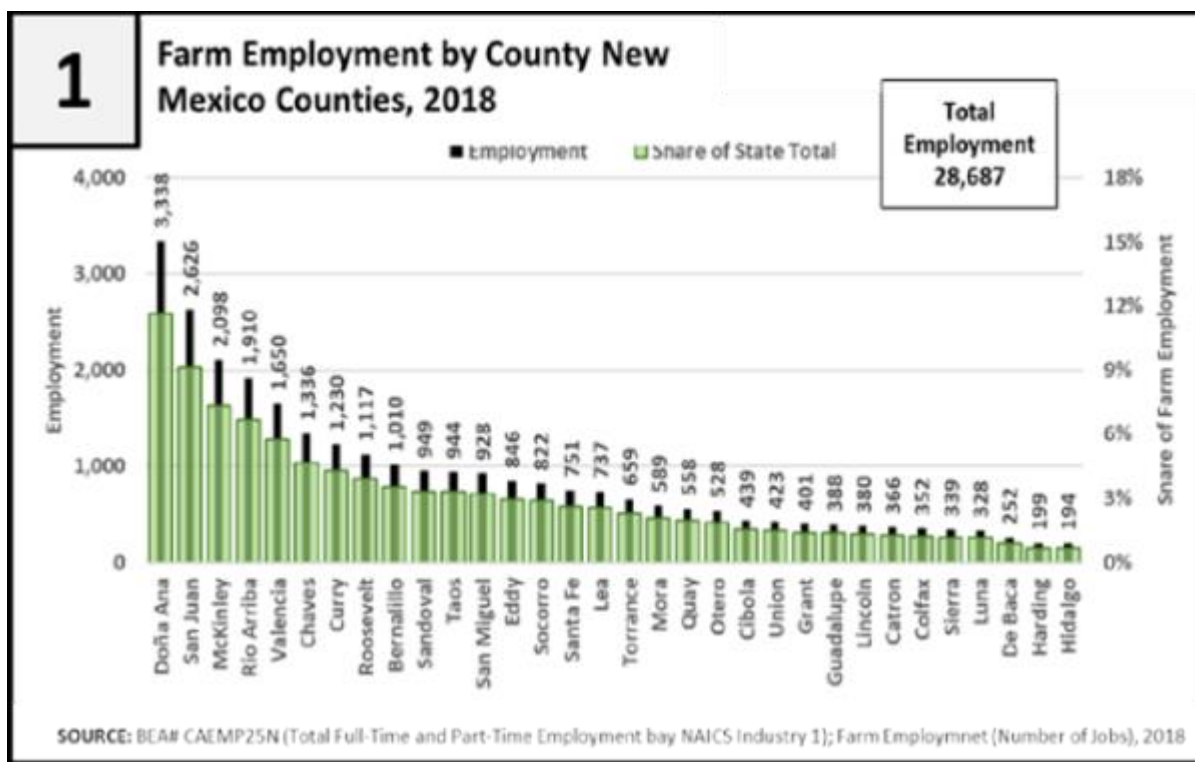
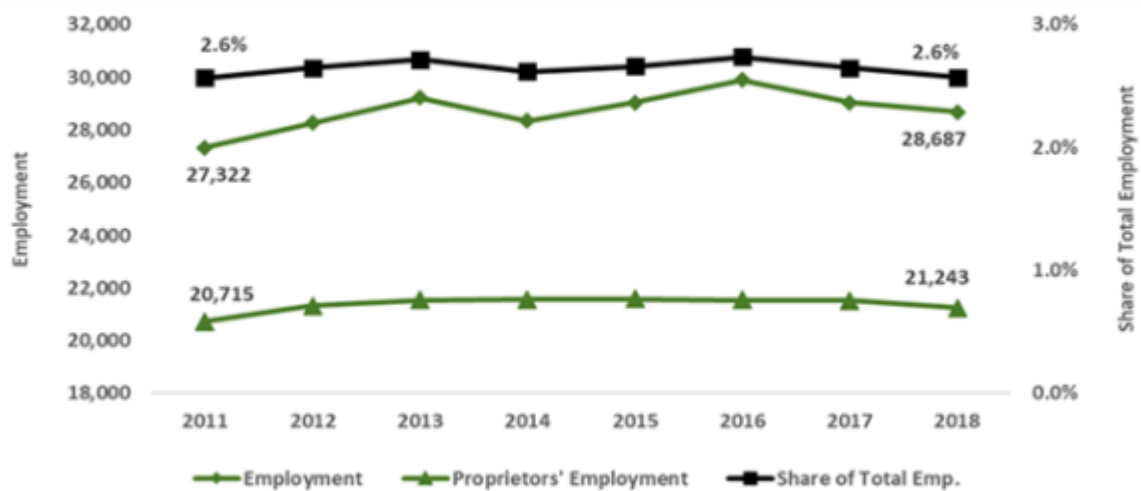


Exhibit 1 provides farm employment at the county level, which is primarily driven by the number of farms in the county. Doña Ana, San Juan, and McKinley counties had the largest farm employment in New Mexico as of 2018. Doña Ana is a top agricultural producer in the state, with 3,338 workers, or 11.6 percent of all New Mexico farm workers. Most farm employment is concentrated to the Northwestern region (San Juan, Rio Arriba, McKinley, and Sandoval) at 7,583 workers, or 26.4 percent of the state's agricultural employment.

As of 2018, the median number of farm workers in each New Mexico County was 698. Of the ten counties that generated the largest market value of agricultural products sold (Curry, Chaves, Doña Ana, Roosevelt, Lea, Eddy, Union, Luna, San Juan, and Socorro), only Luna and Union had fewer workers than the statewide median. The three counties with the most farm employment (Doña Ana, San Miguel, and McKinley), made up 15.4 percent of the total market value of agricultural products sold.

2

Farm Employment In New Mexico 2011-2018

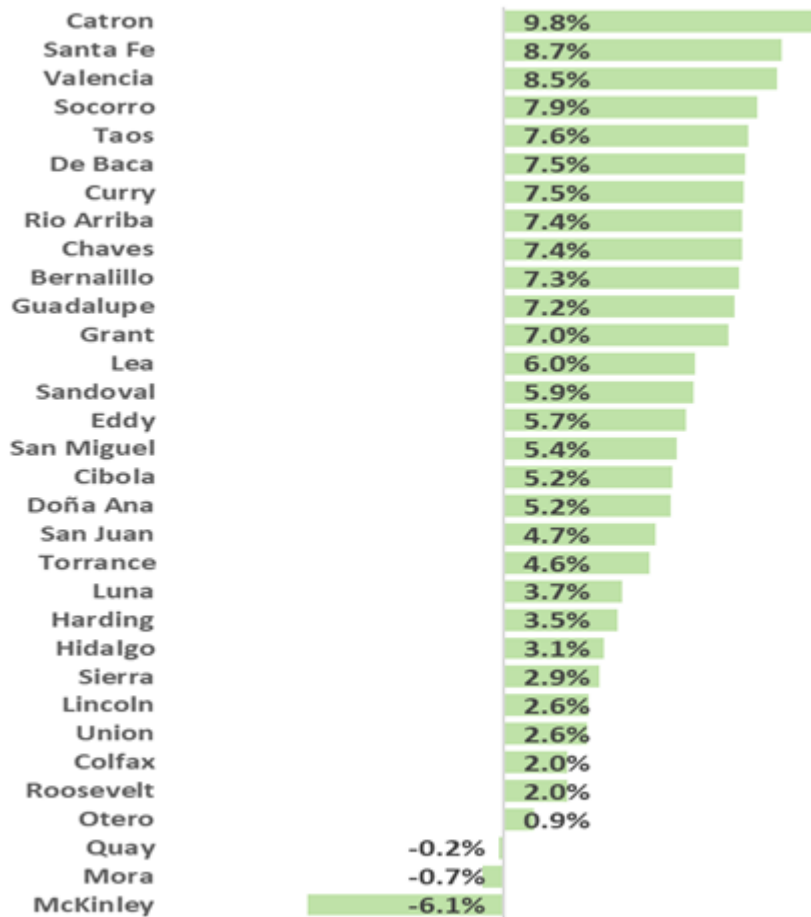


SOURCE: BEA# CAEMP25N (Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by NAICS Industry 1); Farm Employment, Farm Proprietors Employment, Total Employment, Proprietors Employment (Number of Jobs), 2011-2018

Exhibit 2 provides an illustration of farm employment between 2011 and 2018. Based on total farm employment estimates, employment grew by 4.8 percent between 2011 and 2018, or 0.7 percent annually. During the same period, total employment grew by 4.6 percent. The farm employment share of total employment remained consistent between 2011 and 2018, ending the time as it began, at 2.6 percent. In recent years, the ratio of proprietor employment in the agriculture industry has decreased, but the total count of proprietors has remained constant. Between 2011 and 2018, farming proprietorship fell by 1.8 percentage points, and non-farm proprietorship stay relatively level only gaining 0.1 percentage point.

3

Growth in Farm Employment by County 2011-2018



SOURCE: BEA# CAEMP25N (Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by NAICS Industry 1); Farm Employment (Number of Jobs), 2011-2018

Exhibit 3 provides employment growth by county between 2011 and 2018. Catron, Santa Fe, and Valencia counties had the largest growth in farm employment. Only three counties did not see growth during this duration: Quay, Mora, and McKinley. McKinley had the most significant decrease in employment, declining by 6.1 percent. Nationally, farm employment has been trending downwards. From 2011 to 2018, the nation saw a declining rate of 1.3 percent, a slower rate compared to 2001 to 2012 (14.1 percent).

An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means 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.

Agricultural Crop and Labor Data

In New Mexico, during the peak season the estimated number of MSFW is 3,000 and this includes H2A workers. During the low season it is estimated to be 800 MSFWs. The dairy and cattle industry hosts an estimated 3,400 year-round workers. After COVID-19, there was a decrease in migrant workers. In the past, during the peak season, New Mexico would see an increase of approximately 250 migrant workers from TX, AZ, CO, SC, and CA. Most farmworkers are from Mexico and their primary language is Spanish.

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Agricultural Statistics Service, cooperatively issue the New Mexico Agricultural Statistics on an annual basis. This includes the data provided by 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees and MSFW organizations that assist farmworkers monetarily. These benefits include utility assistance, housing, training, tuition assistance, on-the-job training opportunities and emergency assistance when needed.

In the agricultural industry, farmers and farm labor contractors fall under the “joint responsibility” and rule of the Migrant Seasonal Protection Act (MSPA). Therefore, the accountability of the employers has increased and as well as the protection for farmworkers.

Several sources gather information on employment in agriculture operations, including: the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), the USDA’s Census of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). BEA employment estimates include full-time and part-time workers, but BEA data does not include a complete count of all migrants, undocumented or seasonal workers.

Farm Operator Characteristics

In Exhibit 4, the 2017 data is from the Economic Census run by the US Census Department, and it is conducted every five years. The data in the Bureau of Economic Analysis is the most recent data available.

The USDA Agricultural Census collects some information on gender, ethnicity, and race of farm operators, up to four operators per farm. As of 2017, about 40.6 percent of all farm producers were women. As shown in Exhibit 4, the number of women producers increased by 24.1 percent between the 2012 and 2017 census. As of 2017, just under half of all women producers were principal operators (48.1 percent). Although men are still more represented among all producers, the rise of women in principal roles is drastic since 2012, a 60.3 percent increase. This can clearly be seen when looking at the tenure of farms, as women saw a 63.8 percent increase in full ownership of farms, and a 64.7 percent increase in partial ownership, since 2012. However, some of this increase can be attributed to a change in data collection; the 2012 census only collected data of up to three workers per farm, whereas the 2017 census collected up to four.

4

Producer Statistics - Gender, Ethnicity, and Race New Mexico, 2012 and 2017

	2012	2017	Pct Chg 12-17
All Producers	37,166	40,850	9.0%
Principal Producer	24,721	25,044	1.3%
Percentage of all Producers	67%	61%	--
Women Producers	12,584	16,577	24.1%
Principal Producer	4,777	12,047	60.3%
Percentage of Category	19%	48%	--
Full Owners*	2,574	7,110	63.8%
Part Owners*	529	1,500	64.7%
Tenants*	1,674	2,784	39.9%
Spanish/ Hispanic/ Latino	13,195	12,212	-8.0%
Principal Producer	9,377	10,220	8.2%
Percentage of Category	71%	84%	--
Full Owners*	7,010	6,447	-8.7%
Part Owners*	2,262	1,431	-58.1%
Tenants*	475	346	-37.3%
All Races (Principal Operators)	24,721	33,378	25.9%
American Indian	5,202	6,988	25.6%
Asian	29	100	71.0%
Black/African American	39	53	26.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	9	25	64.0%
White	19,293	25,975	25.7%
More than One Race	149	237	37.1%
American Indian	7,439	8,523	12.7%
Principal Producer	5,202	6,988	25.6%
Percentage of Category	70%	82%	--
Full Owners*	877	991	11.5%
Part Owners*	610	403	-51.4%
Tenants*	3,715	4,576	18.8%
* Note that irregular variations from 2012 to 2017 are likely changes in data collection methodology, and definition of terms between the two census reports.			
SOURCE: 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, New Mexico State and County Data (Issued April 2019)			

The 2017 data is from the Economic Census, run by the US Census Department, and it's conducted every five years. Therefore, the data available is the most recent for exhibit 4.

New Mexico has a diverse group of agricultural producers that mirror the racial and ethnic composition of the state's general population. As shown in Exhibit 4, around 12,212 producers (29.8 percent of all operators) identified as Spanish/ Hispanic/Latino. The number of Spanish/ Hispanic/ Latino producers fell by 8.0 percent between 2012 and 2017. This is the only ethnic or racial group to experience a decrease in the number of producers. Since 2017, full ownership among Spanish/Hispanic/Latino producers fell by

8.7 percent, and partial ownership fell drastically by 58.1 percent. However, most Spanish/Hispanic/Latino producers were still full owner of their respective farm (52.7 percent). American Indian producers were more likely to be tenants as opposed to full or part owners. Finally, the largest racial group of principal operators were white, which saw a 25.7 percent increase in principal operators since 2017. Nearly two out of three principal operators in New Mexico, or 63.6 percent of the total, were white.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions is aware of the obligation to provide services to its customers in their dominant and/or preferred language of communication. Every Workforce Connection Center has bilingual (English/Spanish) staff available to ensure assistance is provided as needed.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions is staffed with a full-time State Monitor Advocate and an Outreach Worker. The Las Cruces and Deming Workforce Connection Centers are the only designated "significant" offices. These two offices have the highest number of farmworkers in the state. The Outreach Worker conducts outreach throughout the state and conducts vigorous outreach services in Dona Ana County (Las Cruces/Hatch), Hidalgo, Luna, and Sierra Counties.

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:

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.

A full-time outreach worker will contact farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices by visiting their worksites, conduct home visit, and participate in informational workshops. Partner with NFJP and other farm worker organization and work in collaboration to meet the needs of the farmworker community.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

The New Mexico Workforce Connections will continue to conduct outreach services to MSFWs. Contacts are conducted in person, through field visits, home, and gathering places, farmers, community agencies and other farmworker community events.

In PY 22, New Mexico reported that there were 3,180 MSFW, including H2A program participants, in the state. The outreach worker conducted outreach services to approximately 1500 MSFW's throughout the state. During the peak season (May-October), the outreach worker performed weekly outreach services four days per week and used one day per week to enter data in the Workforce Connection Online System (WCOS). The rest of the year the outreach worker continued to provide services during the off-peak season. SMA, outreach worker, and staff in Deming and a bilingual staff from Las Cruces assist farmworkers with unemployment assistance. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions was able to place bilingual Career Transitional Specialists to assist farmworkers with filing claims in the significant centers. This initiative came in response to the trend of farmworkers in the Southwest part of New Mexico using paid "notorias" to file their unemployment claims. Unfortunately, the "notorias" do not complete their claims correctly.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions outreach policy is to inform MSFWs of the entire scope of services that are available to them and their families. These services include employment, training opportunities, unemployment insurance, referrals to supportive services, as well as employment rights and complaint system.

B. 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 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 complaint system, 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 and Training for Outreach Workers

The outreach worker is included in all Wagner Peyser (WP) staff trainings provided by New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Workforce GPS, and other agencies. The trainings are provided virtually or in person on the following topics:

- One-stop career services
- Partner services
- Customer services
- Communication skills
- Resume writing skills
- Interview skills
- Business services
- Employment services
- Human rights
- Human Trafficking
- Security Awareness Training
- NMDWS Program overview
- The State Monitor Advocate trained outreach worker and significant office staff in the following the Complaint System and Complaint Log and how to handle Apparent Violations

This year, the SMA will contact EEOC and to request human trafficking training for new outreach worker, workforce, NFJP, and partner staff in the Workforce Connection Centers in the Southwest local workforce development area.

The outreach worker and State Monitor Advocate attend national and regional conferences to acquire additional information to better serve the farmworker community. These conferences allow us to collaborate and learn best practices from other states. The outreach worker participates virtually and in person in all SMA quarterly reports, farmworker workshops, and other farmworker agency meetings.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

The outreach worker participated in a six-week onboarding training and received an overview of the department's core programs. The outreach worker has access to unemployment insurance information to assist farmworkers while conducting outreach. The SMA has access to unemployment insurance information and has trained the outreach worker in completion of UI questionnaires, weekly certifications, eligibility, and translation of unemployment insurance correspondence to help serve the farmworker population. The outreach worker is knowledgeable about all core programs including unemployment insurance and familiar with community services and training opportunities for farmworkers.

Currently the department has shifted and has closed the gap between employment services and unemployment insurance. The department has included full-time unemployment staff in the significant offices and 25 out of 27 workforce centers throughout the state. We hope this will reduce the use of the "notorias."

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

The NMDWS Training team provides training to outreach worker on the core programs and must be knowledgeable to assist job seekers and employers. Outreach worker has completed GPS Workforce modules and participated in the Agricultural seminar hosted by Wage & Hour USDOL which included farm labor contractor application overview, MSPA, and Fair Labor Standards Act. Outreach worker attends the employers training provided by SMA and Foreign Labor Coordinator. Outreach worker attended Human trafficking provided by Homeland Security (ICE). The outreach worker is familiar with policy and regulations in order to educate employers to be in compliance and for job seekers to know their employment rights.

The outreach worker has assisted with workforce center events that include job fairs, MSFW workshops, and employer roundtables.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

The outreach worker will maintain ongoing contact and refer MSFWs to the following organizations in and around Dona Ana and Luna counties: NFJP Motivation Education Training (MET Inc.), Migrant Education Program (MEP), NM Department of Health, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Southern New Mexico Legal Aid, NM Law & Poverty, Tierra del Sol

Housing Corporation, New Mexico State University (CAMP), New Mexico Education Livelihood Program-New Mexico, Inc. (HELP-NM), Ben Archer (Promotoras) and USDOL Wage & Hour. Going forward, the outreach worker will participate in the annual Agricultural Employer Seminars in which he will learn about services, topics, and concerns related to the benefits and/or issues affecting the farmworker community.

The Luna County Extension office, USDOL Wage & Hour, Foreign Labor Coordinator and New Mexico Department of Agriculture are resources that the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions will utilize in identifying and providing services to employers

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

One-Stop Delivery System

The significant offices promote and provide an array of services to agricultural employers and farmworkers such as:

Employers	Job seekers
• Employer self-service on-line system (WCOS) • Post job orders and candidate referrals • Recruitment events and job fairs • Employer outreach • Provide Farm Labor Contractor's with applications, fingerprints, vehicle inspection and medical certificate forms • Provide employment posters as well as USDOL and OSHA information • Informational Seminars • WIOA On the Job Training services • NFJP Training services	• Employment registrations (WCOS) and resume and provide copy of ES notice, and Unemployment work search log • Job search and referrals to qualified jobs • Job development contacts (JD) • Referrals to supportive services • WIOA adult and dislocated training • WIOA youth services • NFJP training services • Provide resources room services • Farmworker workshops

Employers	Job seekers
	• Significant offices have full-time staff available to assist farmworkers with filing unemployment claims

The SMA and Outreach Worker complete farm labor contractor's applications and fingerprint cards for farm labor contractors and farm labor contractor employees (crew leaders) who need these services. WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth providers as well as Wagner-Peyser staff have a full-time presence in all Workforce Connection Centers. This allows referrals to be made easily and provides comprehensive one-on-one services. Outreach efforts will also be coordinated with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups, as well as WIOA partners.

The Southwestern Area Local Workforce Development Board has a goal to establish objectives and action steps that serve the workforce needs of employers and job seekers in the farming communities.

- Classroom training to enhance farmworker skills and on the job training for agricultural employers to hire and train new employees.
- Provide technical assistance to partner staff to better serve the farmworker community.
- Offer WIOA supportive services to farmworkers.
- WIOA staff participates in the farmworker workshops conducted in significant offices.
- State Monitor Advocate collaborates with partners to identify partnership strengths and weaknesses.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

Wagner Peyser, WIOA partner staff, MET Inc., (NFJP) and other farmworker organizations were trained in the employment service complaint system and referral process. Wagner Peyser bilingual staff are trained to receive farmworkers' complaints and report apparent violation to the proper enforcement agencies as needed. The Employment Service (ES) notice is a form provided to farmworkers which includes a list of community agencies that offer supportive services. It also includes addresses and phone numbers for each agency and the type of services they offer. Therefore, the ES notice is always provided to farmworkers at the time of registration. Wagner-Peyser staff will attend meetings sponsored by farmworker organizations to learn about their services and be able to refer farmworkers and their families to these agencies.

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) collaborates with state and federal enforcement agencies to ensure the resolution of all complaints. The SMA evaluates all local office complaints received and logs for accuracy and timely processing and complaint resolutions. The SMA also ensures bilingual complaint posters are posted in all the workforce centers and include the State Monitor Advocate's name, address and phone number.

During the collaboration meetings, the SMA and outreach worker will continue to educate and promote the complaint system process to all farmworker organizations, WIOA partner staff as well as other local and state agencies to ensure proper utilization of the complaint system.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) is used by the local offices throughout the state to prove that NM has enough workers to refer and fill job orders posted by agricultural employers. NM markets ARS to agricultural employers to improve its publicity. For instance, staff conduct file searches in the system for qualified applicants and contacts these individuals via phone calls or emails to notify them of these openings. Staff work closely with employer to fill job orders and match applicants to the skills require and needed for the positions.

NM promotes ARS to agricultural employers to improve publicity and utilizes the following methods:

- Workforce Connection online system (WCOS)
- In-person field visits
- Outreach workers promote during outreach activities.
- SMA promotes during annual workshops.
- Luna County NMSU Extension Office

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).

New Mexico attends several collaboration meetings with the agencies who serve our farmworker population and their families. Currently monthly meetings are held with NFJP 167 MET and joint outreach. In collaboration with NFJP, we host quarterly meetings and discuss updates with other farmworker agencies. Every year the SMA, Foreign Labor Coordinator, NFJP, and the Economic Development Department collaborate to host an agricultural seminar for employers to provide regulations updates. Two sessions are scheduled in English and Spanish. Currently, there is a MOU in place with NFJP and Tierra Del Sol.

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.

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 plan was placed online at dws.state.nm.us for public review and comments. The notification of public comment was also placed in print news to allow for at least 30 days of review and public comment. No public comments were received from neither the online nor printed publications. An in-person coordination meeting between the New Mexico State Director of MET Inc. National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) took place with the SMA. The agenda included suggestions by MET, as follows:

1. Coordination of outreach for food, clothing and resource events to include tentative calendar dates.
2. Scheduling of cross- trainings for staff to better understand the role of the NFJP provider, so that staff will be able to speak of the program when conducting various outreach.
3. Coordination of quarterly meetings to include assigned designees to track meeting notes and track next action steps.
4. Develop methods to communicate services and better align with scheduled calendar outreach events to fully serve farmworkers and families that cannot come into an office due to distance and or transportation.
5. Inform all stakeholders of the progress made or the reasons why action or progress was not obtained. Continuous communication of outcomes and support needs will be evaluated.

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.

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 to meet such goals.

In the past four years the state has improved its goals to provide MSFW's quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFW's. Unfortunately, two of the activities were not captured in the data and have reported 0 for the past few years. Last month this error was corrected.

The SMA continues to provide technical assistance and training to staff to meet indicators and correct any findings while conducting monitoring at the significant workforce center.

In 2023, a new supervisor requested SME's at each significant office to assist with registration process, activities, and case notes to improve the quality of the registration process.

Data Assessment. In assessing New Mexico's Labor Exchange Agricultural Reporting System (LEARS) for PY22, New Mexico has not met Equity Service Level Indicators due to activities being auto populated to another program.

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 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.

Assessment of Progress. SMA will work closely with area managers to educate staff in promoting services, data entry and meeting required indicators. SMA will continue to work with employers to educate and ensure they are complying, and to participate in conferences, workshops, and seminars to meet their employment needs.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

State Monitor Advocate. The SMA has reviewed and approved the Agricultural Outreach Plan.

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	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	
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 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.	Yes
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

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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	60.7%	63.0%	60.7%	63.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.4%	63.0%	60.4%	63.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,570	\$7,170	\$5,750	\$7,170

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
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

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The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

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 2016, New Mexico Higher Education Department, Adult Education Division, (NMHED-AE) adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) developed by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education, to align with the Common Core Standards that had been adopted for the K-12 system. Curriculum or courseware used by Adult Education programs statewide must adhere to CCRS. NMHED-AE has identified curricular and instructional alignment with the CCRS as one of the priorities in the 2024-2027 Combined State Plan. This priority is being implemented by Propel, the statewide adult education professional learning system funded by NMHED-AE. These professional learning opportunities are and will be diverse and will be partly based upon OCTAE's Standards to Action model.

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.

Competitive Process: The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) is the State's eligible agency for administering Adult Education and Literacy programs under WIOA. The Adult Education Division oversees this effort. NMHED is required to award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers within the state to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within the State. Eligible providers must use AEFLA funds to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide these concurrently. The competition must ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for AEFLA funds and that the same grant or contract announcement or application process are used for all eligible providers. NMHED runs its competitions for Sections 231, 243, and 225 funding in accordance with 34 CFR, 463.24, Subpart C. NMHED uses a Request for Applications (RFA) process that follows both state procurement rules and federal guidelines under WIOA. At present, NMHED is in the middle of a 4-year grant cycle that began on July 1, 2021, with 26 awards issued to local providers in all four workforce regions. The RFA process for the next multi-year grant cycle is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2025 for funding to begin July 1, 2025. Any announcement will be contingent upon State Plan approval by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. If such approval is granted, the anticipated competition timeline is:

- January 2025: NMHED issues a statewide, public Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) and a formal Request for Applications (RFA).
- February 2025: NMHED provides a technical assistance conference and assembles its review panel.
- March 2025: Grant applications are due by the date specified in the application.
- April 2025: Applications are sent to local workforce development boards for review. Reviewers read and score AEFLA grant applications.
- May 2025: NMHED announces grant proposals approved to receive funding. NMHED also holds negotiation conferences with grant recipients.
- June 2025: Final grant award notification (GAN) letters are sent to grant recipients.

It is important to note that the NOFA and RFP will be advertised statewide and sent to all known eligible service providers, covering all funding categories and programs available for current year distribution. Both will be sent to all requesting parties. All eligible recipients for AEFLA Section 225, 231, and/or 243 funds will be allowed the same opportunity to apply for funds regardless of the priorities they address, and they will follow the same RFA process. While the nature of the NOFA and RFA process will be identical, funding set aside for both Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals will be addressed and distributed via a separate RFA process with program-specific content and criteria for evaluation that conform to WIOA requirements for Section 225 and Section 243 programs.

Applicant Eligibility: Federal regulations governing AEFLA (34 CFR, 463) clarify that only an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services may apply for AEFLA funds. AEFLA lists 10 organization types that may be eligible providers and further permits other organization types to apply. These include:

1. A local educational agency
2. A community-based organization or faith-based organization
3. A volunteer literacy organization
4. An institution of higher education
5. A public or private nonprofit agency
6. A library
7. A public housing authority
8. A nonprofit institution that is not described (A)-(G)
 1. A consortium or coalition of entities listed in (A)-(H)
10. A partnership between an employer and an entity listed in (A)-(H)

NMHED is responsible for determining if an application is from an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. In its AEFLA RFA, NMHED will specify the process for an applicant to follow when submitting data on demonstrated effectiveness.

Demonstrated Effectiveness: NMHED runs its competitions for Sections 231, 243, and 225 funding in accordance with 34 CFR, 463.24, Subpart C, which addresses how an applicant establishes that it has demonstrated effectiveness, defined as the applicant's "record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains for reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds." An applicant must provide objective performance data to reflect this, as well as to demonstrate a history of "outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training." There are two ways an eligible provider might meet the demonstrated effectiveness portion of the eligibility requirement, depending on whether or not the applicant has been funded under AEFLA in the past, as amended by WIOA. If an applicant has previously received an AEFLA grant, then it will specifically be required to submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. If an applicant has not previously received an AEFLA grant, the applicant must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals and include evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in 34 CFR 463.24, Subpart C. The regulation establishes uniformity for determining demonstrated effectiveness and ensures that potential providers who have not received AEFLA funding in the past have an opportunity to compete for these funds. They also leave the State and its eligible agency, in this case NMHED, some flexibility. While NMHED cannot add any new criteria or data to the definition of demonstrated effectiveness set in regulation, it can determine both the number of years of data it will require and, importantly, the efficacy threshold on which it will screen applications.

Determining Demonstrated Effectiveness and Applicant Eligibility: NMHED must certify that each applicant meets both tiers of the eligibility requirement discussed above, including the demonstrated effectiveness requirement. To meet this obligation, the same grant announcement and RFA process will be used. This single process will contain two distinct phases of screening, with the first phase limited to pure eligibility screening and yielding simply a "yes" or "no" answer. To demonstrate effectiveness, eligible providers will provide NMHED with at least two years of performance data reflecting outcomes. The set threshold of demonstrated effectiveness that NMHED will use to ascertain that a provider may be considered for funding will be included in the RFA. Application materials will transparently address both aspects of applicant eligibility, including a clear outline of the method NMHED requests applicants use for supplying required data on demonstrated effectiveness and how NMHED intends to evaluate the data. Care will be taken to ensure the applicant understands the difference between the demonstrated effectiveness component of the initial eligibility screening process, and the "past effectiveness" consideration used to evaluate proposals that have earned a "yes" in the eligibility screening phase. Once NMHED completes the eligibility screening process, only those applications that pass this initial review process will advance to the competitive phase of the application and proposal review process.

General Proposal Requirements: All proposals must be submitted by the deadline listed in the RFA. Each applicant shall apply for the grant according to the instructions contained in the RFA.

Any application not including all the information and assurances required will be deemed non-responsive and rejected. NMHED will forward all responsive applications to the local workforce board in the region(s) from which they applied for review and comment on their alignment with the regional WIOA plan. These reviews will be taken into consideration during proposal evaluation and final scoring.

AEFLA grant applicants should expect the RFAs to require information in the following general categories:

- Performance data sufficient to demonstrate effectiveness.
- Financial statements to demonstrate solvency and sound fiscal management.
- A description of how funds awarded under AEFLA would be spent.
- A description of how the applicant would meet the State adjusted levels of AEFLA-specific performance, including how the applicant would collect data to report on such performance indicators.
- A description of how the applicant would provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals.
- A description of any cooperative or co-enrollment arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of sanctioned Adult Education and Literacy activities; and
- A description of how the applicant would provide services in alignment with the Combined State and Local Plans, including how the applicant would promote concurrent enrollment with core WIOA partners and how the applicant will fulfill One Stop partner responsibilities outlined by WIOA.

Assurances must be provided that all funds awarded under AEFLA will be used to provide, establish, or operate programs that provide instruction and services corresponding to allowable AEFLA activities listed, defined in Section 203 of WIOA. These activities are listed below. The first two listed (Adult Education and Literacy) are required activities; the remaining six are allowable AEFLA activities.

1. **Adult Education:** Academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that include an individual's ability to read, write, and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment.
2. **Literacy:** The ability to read, write, and speak in English and to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society.
3. **Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities:** Adult Education and literacy activities in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.

4. **Family Literacy Activities:** Activities of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family that better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:
 1. Parent or family Adult Education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency;
 2. Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children;
 3. Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and
 4. Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

NOTE: As previously indicated, no funds under an AEFLA grant may be used 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 in the case of family literacy programs. In providing family literacy activities under AEFLA, 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.

5. **English Language Acquisition Activities:** A program of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language and that leads to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent and transition to postsecondary education and training or employment.
6. **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education:** Educational services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enable them to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training.

NOTE: As previously indicated, Section 243 (IELCE) funding and Section 225 (Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals) will be awarded under a separate RFA following the same process as and simultaneous with the Adult Education and English Language Acquisition RFA. WIOA legislation and OCTAE have separate requirements for providers who submit applications under Sections 243 and Section 225.

7. **Workforce Preparation Activities:** Activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and

obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.

8. **Integrated Education and Training:** A service approach that provides Adult Education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. This includes offering courses in collaboration with postsecondary institutions, employers, or trade associations that are team-taught by an Adult Education basic skills instructor and a Career and Technical Education instructor.

Proposal Evaluation and Considerations for Funding: A review team selected by NMHED based on published criteria will evaluate all potential service provider applications. Each evaluator will complete an evaluation form for each applicant. While the names of each evaluator will be kept confidential, the scores assigned to each application by each evaluator will be retained and available for public review upon request. In addition to the General Application Requirements already outlined, within the narrative portion of the application, proposers will be required to explain how they will meet each of the 13 required considerations outlined in Section 231(e) of WIOA. Grouped into overarching categories, these considerations include the need for each applicant to demonstrate effectiveness, need for service, program accessibility, program quality, alignment and coordination, relevance, and capacity for administration and compliance. The full text for all 13 considerations NMHED is required to evaluate is provided below:

1. The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to (A) the regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners.
2. The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities.
3. Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.
4. The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners.
5. Whether the eligible provider's program (A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and (B) uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.
6. Whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research

available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice.

7. Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.
8. Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means.
10. Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways;
11. Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as childcare, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;
12. Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and
13. Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

NMHED must include at least these 13 considerations when evaluating proposal applications, though it may decide how to weigh each consideration. If NMHED includes additional considerations for evaluating applicant proposals, they will be clearly defined in the RFA application and marked as "STATE" considerations or requirements. As is customary, to demonstrate that the 13 considerations listed above were considered in the competitive process, NMHED will score and weight these (and all other) considerations according to a published rubric as part of the application evaluation process. One of the 13 required considerations addresses past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals with low levels of literacy. To be clear, rating an application with respect to this "past effectiveness" consideration is not an allowable substitution for NMHED when

conducting applicant eligibility screening. The determination of applicant eligibility, including demonstrated effectiveness, must come first since it is required to be separate and distinct from rating "past effectiveness" as one of the 13 evaluation considerations described above. This means that it would be entirely possible for an applicant to pass the initial round of eligibility screening, to advance to the evaluation and rating phase of the competition and score very low on the past effectiveness consideration. Depending on how NMHED chooses to weigh this consideration, it would be possible for the applicant in this example to be deemed ultimately non-competitive.

Distribution of Funding: Applicants selected to receive AEFLA grants will be informed in writing. Prior to receiving awards, selected applicants will be required to engage in a final negotiation process with NMHED. Areas subject to negotiation include the final approved budget(s). The negotiation process may include changes in final funding amounts or to line items to bring said budgets into compliance with federal and state regulations and/or fund availability. The final negotiation process may also include additional areas that might require technical assistance or clarification, such as professional development plans. NMHED will work with accepted applicants to schedule this negotiation process and to provide any needed technical assistance. A final, written grant agreement will be sent to each awarded provider. Once this agreement is signed, it - along with the eligible provider's original application - will constitute the grant agreement.

The amount of funding available in each program year to each eligible provider awarded an AEFLA grant will be determined by available state and federal funds and distributed equitably according to a published funding formula. This formula is determined by NMHED in consultation with Adult Education program directors and financial officers from eligible provider institutions and organizations. It is formally reviewed at least once every four (4) years. The last review began in 2021 and concluded in spring of 2022. The next review and potential revision must begin in 2025 and conclude by spring of 2026, though it may begin earlier than this in response to challenges inherent in the current funding formula that were not perceived when it was established in 2022. At minimum, this funding formula will take into account the number of participants served and performance on core indicators under WIOA. Provisions to incentivize performance or service population targets may also be included in the funding formula.

NMHED will ensure direct and equitable access to all applicants by using the NOFA grant announcement and RFA application procedure described earlier in this section. Public notice of the NOFA and RFA will be issued through multiple venues. At minimum, the NOFA plus instructions for receiving a written copy of the RFA will be published in the Albuquerque Journal, a newspaper with statewide circulation. The NOFA and RFA will also be published on the NMHED website. Copies of both will be mailed directly to all existing local adult education service providers, as well as to all who request it. Should additional funding become available in the middle of a grant cycle (as in the case of the withdrawal of a provider during the term of a grant), the same process will be used to provide services in the applicable service area and will be open to all eligible agencies throughout the state. All eligible applicants for Sections 225, 231, and 243 of WIOA will submit applications via the same application process directly to NMHED, the eligible agency. They will not be required to apply through another agency or agencies in a multi-tiered process. The application process is designed so that direct application to NMHED is evident and nonnegotiable. Direct application for the grant is the norm. This ensures that all

applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria. It also ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and review process is used for all eligible providers. Prior to the application deadline, any eligible agency that contacts NMHED with an interest in participating will be provided with the information requested. Prior to the application deadline, NMHED will conduct a technical assistance webinar for potential applicants. An invitation to attend any prescheduled conference is attached to the NOFA and RFA or published in conjunction with it. Serving as the program officer, the State Adult Education Director will respond in writing to individual questions before and after this conference; all questions and responses are published on the NMHED website. These approaches meet or exceed all requirements specified in AEFLA and in the State's procurement policies.

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.

NMHED will run its competition for section 225 in accordance with 34 CFR § 463 Subpart C. The eligible agency currently uses the same grant announcement and competitive application process for Section 225 as it does for other funds made available under Section 222, though applicants may choose to apply for funds only under Section 225. This includes the same process timeline outlined earlier in this document, the same methods for ensuring direct and equitable access, the same 13 required considerations specified in Section 231(e) of WIOA as part of the review criteria, and the same rubric and scoring criteria -- *with additional considerations added to the application in order to reflect the range of allowable activities under*

Section 225. Funds are distributed according to the funding formula described at length elsewhere in this Plan. As specified in WIOA 222 (a)(1), the eligible agency will ensure that no more than 20 percent of AEFLA grant funds will be allocated to sub-grantees for the purpose of carrying out Section 225 activities.

Allowable activities under Section 225 include: (1) adult education and literacy activities; (2) special education, as determined by the eligible agency; (3) secondary school credit; (4) integrated education and training; (5) career pathways; (6) concurrent enrollment; (7) peer tutoring; and (8) transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Historically, our largest sub grantee receiving funds dedicated to Section 225 activities have used these funds to target Section 225 activities (1), (4), (5), (7), and (8).

In Section 225 of WIOA, the term “correctional institution” means any: (A) prison; (B) jail; (C); reformatory; (D) work farm; (E) detention center, or (F) halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. At present, the New Mexico Corrections Department and seven other local Adult Education programs around the state are funded to provide services and activities that fall under Section 225. There is a great need for these services and activities, and the eligible agency would like to see continued expansion of these efforts. As one of NMHED’s largest AEFLA sub-grantees and also a state agency, the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is currently responsible for the administration of Adult Education programs, services, and activities in eight publicly-operated state prisons and two private prisons. Education is housed in the Reentry Division of NMCD. Adult Education functions within the NMCD-organized and supported system of Education and Recidivism Reduction programs, including cognitive-behavioral therapy programs, post-secondary education programs, family reunification programs, reentry programs, and vocational programs. The seven other programs around the state that are funded to serve this population include Gordon Bernell Charter School, which serves students within the Metropolitan Detention Center in Albuquerque, and also runs community-based programs. The other funded programs exist throughout the state and serve institutionalized individuals in a range of county-based detention and treatment centers.

NMHED uses a Request for Applications (RFA) process that follows both state procurement rules and federal guidelines under WIOA. The RFA process for the next multi-year grant cycle, which will include a competition for Section 225 funds, is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2025 for funding to begin July 1, 2025. Any announcement will be contingent upon State Plan approval by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. If such approval is granted, the anticipated competition timeline is:

- January 2025: NMHED issues a statewide, public Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) and a formal Request for Applications (RFA).
- February 2025: NMHED provides a technical assistance conference and assembles its review panel.
- March 2025: Grant applications are due by the date specified in the application.
- April 2025: Applications are sent to local workforce development boards for review. Reviewers read and score AEFLA grant applications.

- May 2025: NMHED announces grant proposals approved to receive funding. NMHED also holds negotiation conferences with grant recipients.
- June 2025: Final grant award notification (GAN) letters are sent to grant recipients.

It is important to note that the NOFA and RFP will be advertised statewide and sent to all known eligible service providers, covering all funding categories and programs available for current year distribution. Both will be sent to all requesting parties. All eligible recipients for AEFLA Section 225, 231, and/or 243 funds will be allowed the same opportunity to apply for funds regardless of the priorities they address, and they will follow the same RFA process. While the nature of the NOFA and RFA process will be identical, funding set aside for both Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals will be addressed and distributed via a separate RFA process with program-specific content and criteria for evaluation that conform to WIOA requirements for Section 225 and Section 243 programs.

Applicant Eligibility: Federal regulations governing AEFLA (34 CFR, 463) clarify that only an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services may apply for AEFLA funds. AEFLA lists 10 organization types that may be eligible providers and further permits other organization types to apply. These include:

1. A local educational agency
2. A community-based organization or faith-based organization
3. A volunteer literacy organization
4. An institution of higher education
5. A public or private nonprofit agency
6. A library
7. A public housing authority
8. A nonprofit institution that is not described (A)-(G)
1. A consortium or coalition of entities listed in (A)-(H)
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NMHED is responsible for determining if an application is from an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. In its AEFLA RFA, NMHED will specify the process for an applicant to follow when submitting data on demonstrated effectiveness.

Demonstrated Effectiveness: NMHED runs its competitions for Sections 231, 243, and 225 funding in accordance with 34 CFR, 463.24, Subpart C, which addresses how an applicant establishes that it has demonstrated effectiveness, defined as the applicant's "record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains for reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds." An applicant must provide objective performance data to reflect this, as well as to demonstrate a history of "outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a

secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training.” There are two ways an eligible provider might meet the demonstrated effectiveness portion of the eligibility requirement, depending on whether or not the applicant has been funded under AEFLA in the past, as amended by WIOA. If an applicant has previously received an AEFLA grant, then it will specifically be required to submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. If an applicant has not previously received an AEFLA grant, the applicant must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals and include evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in 34 CFR 463.24, Subpart C. The regulation establishes uniformity for determining demonstrated effectiveness and ensures that potential providers who have not received AEFLA funding in the past have an opportunity to compete for these funds. They also leave the State and its eligible agency, in this case NMHED, some flexibility. While NMHED cannot add any new criteria or data to the definition of demonstrated effectiveness set in regulation, it can determine both the number of years of data it will require and, importantly, the efficacy threshold on which it will screen applications.

Determining Demonstrated Effectiveness and Applicant Eligibility: NMHED must certify that each applicant meets both tiers of the eligibility requirement discussed above, including the demonstrated effectiveness requirement. To meet this obligation, the same grant announcement and RFA process will be used. This single process will contain two distinct phases of screening, with the first phase limited to pure eligibility screening and yielding simply a "yes" or "no" answer. To demonstrate effectiveness, eligible providers will provide NMHED with at least two years of performance data reflecting outcomes. The set threshold of demonstrated effectiveness that NMHED will use to ascertain that a provider may be considered for funding will be included in the RFA. Application materials will transparently address both aspects of applicant eligibility, including a clear outline of the method NMHED requests applicants use for supplying required data on demonstrated effectiveness and how NMHED intends to evaluate the data. Care will be taken to ensure the applicant understands the difference between the demonstrated effectiveness component of the initial eligibility screening process, and the "past effectiveness" consideration used to evaluate proposals that have earned a "yes" in the eligibility screening phase. Once NMHED completes the eligibility screening process, only those applications that pass this initial review process will advance to the competitive phase of the application and proposal review process.

Enrollment in Adult Education is structurally supported by New Mexico state statute via the Inmate Literacy Act, which mandates that any person incarcerated in a state facility with a sentence greater than 18 months and less than 10 years be required to enroll in "Adult Basic Education" if they do not have a high school diploma or recognized equivalent. Due in part to limited allocated resources, inmate wait lists are maintained. As with other education and reentry programs, enrollment and service priority for Adult Education classes is given to inmates who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program, a policy which adheres to AEFLA Section 225 requirements. Postsecondary education and career and technical (vocational) education opportunities are expanding rapidly at NMCD. A high priority for the collaboration between NMCD and NMHED-AE has been IET offerings at NMCD. NMHED-AE is also prioritizing professional learning opportunities for Corrections-based adult education teachers and service to incarcerated individuals in 2024-2027 due to the unique challenges and barriers to employment that this population experiences.

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.

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.

NMHED will run its AEFLA competition using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR § 463 subpart C. The agency ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants or contracts. It ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and proposal evaluation process is used for all eligible providers. All eligible applicants for AEFLA funding under WIOA sections 225, 231, and/or 243 will be allowed the same opportunity to apply for funds regardless of the priorities they address, and they will follow the same RFA process.

The RFA process for the next multi-year grant cycle for all AEFLA funds (including the separate RFA for section 243 funds) is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2025 for funding to begin July 1, 2025. While the nature of the NOFA and RFA process will be identical, the funding set aside for Section 243 IELCE programs will be addressed and distributed via a separate RFA process with program-specific content and criteria for evaluation that conform to WIOA requirements for IELCE programs. In addition to the core required 13 considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, IELCE proposers will be required to describe their civics curriculum and instructional materials and how they align with the College and Career Readiness Standards and OCTAE's Employability Skills framework, or other comparable and widely accepted national

framework and how these materials are based on industry standards. Applicants will also be required to describe their relationships with workforce and economic development boards and with local employers, and how those relationships will support integrated education and training for speakers of languages other than English, including professionals with credentials and degrees in their native countries.

NMHED uses a Request for Applications (RFA) process that follows both state procurement rules and federal guidelines under WIOA. At present, NMHED is in the middle of a 4-year grant cycle that began on July 1, 2021, with 26 awards issued to local providers in all four workforce regions. The RFA process for the next multi-year grant cycle is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2025 for funding to begin July 1, 2025. Any announcement will be contingent upon State Plan approval by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. If such approval is granted, the anticipated competition timeline is:

- January 2025: NMHED issues a statewide, public Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) and a formal Request for Applications (RFA).
- February 2025: NMHED provides a technical assistance conference and assembles its review panel.
- March 2025: Grant applications are due by the date specified in the application.
- April 2025: Applications are sent to local workforce development boards for review. Reviewers read and score AEFLA grant applications.
- May 2025: NMHED announces grant proposals approved to receive funding. NMHED also holds negotiation conferences with grant recipients.
- June 2025: Final grant award notification (GAN) letters are sent to grant recipients.

It is important to note that the NOFA and RFP will be advertised statewide and sent to all known eligible service providers, covering all funding categories and programs available for current year distribution. Both will be sent to all requesting parties. All eligible recipients for AEFLA Section 225, 231, and/or 243 funds will be allowed the same opportunity to apply for funds regardless of the priorities they address, and they will follow the same RFA process. While the nature of the NOFA and RFA process will be identical, funding set aside for both Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Corrections Education and Education for Other Institutionalized Individuals will be addressed and distributed via a separate RFA process with program-specific content and criteria for evaluation that conform to WIOA requirements for Section 225 and Section 243 programs.

Applicant Eligibility: Federal regulations governing AEFLA (34 CFR, 463) clarify that only an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services may apply for AEFLA funds. AEFLA lists 10 organization types that may be eligible providers and further permits other organization types to apply. These include:

1. A local educational agency
2. A community-based organization or faith-based organization
3. A volunteer literacy organization

4. An institution of higher education
5. A public or private nonprofit agency
6. A library
7. A public housing authority
8. A nonprofit institution that is not described (A)-(G)
1. A consortium or coalition of entities listed in (A)-(H)
10. A partnership between an employer and an entity listed in (A)-(H)

NMHED is responsible for determining if an application is from an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. In its AEFLA RFA, NMHED will specify the process for an applicant to follow when submitting data on demonstrated effectiveness.

Demonstrated Effectiveness: NMHED runs its competitions for Sections 231, 243, and 225 funding in accordance with 34 CFR, 463.24, Subpart C, which addresses how an applicant establishes that it has demonstrated effectiveness, defined as the applicant's "record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains for reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds." An applicant must provide objective performance data to reflect this, as well as to demonstrate a history of "outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training." There are two ways an eligible provider might meet the demonstrated effectiveness portion of the eligibility requirement, depending on whether or not the applicant has been funded under AEFLA in the past, as amended by WIOA. If an applicant has previously received an AEFLA grant, then it will specifically be required to submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. If an applicant has not previously received an AEFLA grant, the applicant must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals and include evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in 34 CFR 463.24, Subpart C. The regulation establishes uniformity for determining demonstrated effectiveness and ensures that potential providers who have not received AEFLA funding in the past have an opportunity to compete for these funds. They also leave the State and its eligible agency, in this case NMHED, some flexibility. While NMHED cannot add any new criteria or data to the definition of demonstrated effectiveness set in regulation, it can determine both the number of years of data it will require and, importantly, the efficacy threshold on which it will screen applications.

Determining Demonstrated Effectiveness and Applicant Eligibility: NMHED must certify that each applicant meets both tiers of the eligibility requirement discussed above, including the demonstrated effectiveness requirement. To meet this obligation, the same grant announcement and RFA process will be used. This single process will contain two distinct phases of screening, with the first phase limited to pure eligibility screening and yielding simply a "yes" or "no" answer. To demonstrate effectiveness, eligible providers will provide NMHED with at least two years of performance data reflecting outcomes. The set threshold of demonstrated effectiveness that NMHED will use to ascertain that a provider may be considered for funding will be included in the RFA. Application materials will transparently address both

aspects of applicant eligibility, including a clear outline of the method NMHED requests applicants use for supplying required data on demonstrated effectiveness and how NMHED intends to evaluate the data. Care will be taken to ensure the applicant understands the difference between the demonstrated effectiveness component of the initial eligibility screening process, and the "past effectiveness" consideration used to evaluate proposals that have earned a "yes" in the eligibility screening phase. Once NMHED completes the eligibility screening process, only those applications that pass this initial review process will advance to the competitive phase of the application and proposal review process.

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.

NMHED-AE funds and will continue to support continuous program improvement among eight Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs. We require all IELCE providers funded under section 243 of WIOA to offer services in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR 463.36. NMHED is currently engaged in a statewide professional development effort to both expand high-quality IET programming and encourage programs to build IET programs that are accessible and attractive to adult English language learners, including those served under Section 243 of WIOA. While programs are informed of their responsibility to provide this access, the challenges, time, and funds associated with starting an IET program are significant. IELCE-funded programs that do design and implement IET programs must do their best to create a pathway to an occupation that interests most of their students. In addition, it can be very challenging for many IELCE students to achieve the proper authorization to work in the industries that an IET prepares them for, such that participation may not have the desired workforce outcomes.

NMHED-AE's application for IELCE Section 243 funds will require applicants to specifically demonstrate their intention and ability to provide literacy, English language acquisition, and civics education concurrently and contextually and in combination with integrated education and training or other job training. Proposed activities and budget are reviewed by NMHED to ensure they meet all Section 243 statutory requirements. Eligibility for Section 243 IELCE program students is established in the same way it is for all Adult Education students, regardless of degree or credential attainment.

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.

All IELCE applicants must describe how they will develop a program that integrates all the IELCE elements: English literacy, civics, workforce preparation, and work training. Grantees are required to provide English instruction that is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and contextualized to both civics and career pathways. Ongoing monitoring, technical assistance, and professional development for this program help ensure all the components are included, that outcomes are coded properly, and that they continuously improve to provide the best possible service to this valued population in our state.

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.

All Section 243 IELCE program providers are tasked with preparing their participants for unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. In essence, this is a task shared by *all* local Adult Education program providers and thus discussed at length in various sections of this Plan. Some IELCE providers develop partnerships with local businesses while others employ career navigators to assist students in understanding their options and working toward their educational, training, and employment goals.

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.

Like all Adult Education program providers, all Section 243 IELCE program providers must collaborate with their local workforce development system and its functions to support the activities of the program. This includes potentially collaborating with business and industry, core WIOA partner and other economic development agencies, and local workforce development boards and One Stops. All Section 243 IELCE programs must have MOUs in place with their local workforce development boards (usually in conjunction with the Section 231-funded program). Due to the many required components of being an IELCE program provider, including the IET and job training components, strong partnerships are essential. While certainly this comprehensive program model comes with many implementation challenges, collaborations with industry workforce partners are possible and a priority for NMHED-AE in 2024-2027.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

Section 223 of WIOA stipulates that each eligible agency shall use funds made available under Section 222(a)(2) to prioritize certain State Leadership activities outlined in that Section. In accordance with Section 223 of WIOA, NMHED will prioritize the four (4) State Leadership activities:

- 1. The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategy identified in the combined State plan under section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.**

Funds shall be used to continue to support the alignment of Adult Education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategies identified in the State Plan under Section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. For Title II, this will happen on two levels:

Local Adult Education and literacy provider collaborations and partnerships with their "host" organization or institution of higher education; with local one-stops and workforce development boards; with regional sector strategy collaborations; with local nonprofit organizations; and with the local business community. Alignment will also occur at the State agency level with core WIOA and other Combined State Plan partners.

Strategic priority activities include:

1. NMHED-AE seeks to expand and continuously improve the quality of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs in New Mexico. We seek to collaborate with our Title I partners to support IET students to access funding for the workforce training component of IET programs and facilitate employer access, and with our Title IV partners to support learners with disabilities.
2. A system-wide priority for Title II, and our work with partners, is to reduce barriers to access to education, training, and the workforce for New Mexico adult learners through improved collaboration between core partners. To this end, NMHED-AE seeks to:
 - a. Improve referrals between WIOA core title partners in each workforce development area, boosting co-enrollments for improved service and outcomes for New Mexico adults.
 - b. Align data sharing requirements and system between Titles I and II.
 - c. Collaborate with Title IV partners to support learners with disabilities.
 - d. Strengthen relationships between all local core partners and raise awareness of services available to students by encouraging regular visits of local core partners to Adult Education programs to speak to students and, if possible, to be co-located at the college.
 - e. Collaborate with Title I partners to evaluate, refine, and strengthen WIOA I application process, including clear instructions and guidance, to support adult education student access to Title I services, promoting increased equity for learners.
 - f. Ensure that equitable services are provided for students who speak English as a second language, prioritizing the needs of immigrant newcomers to the state.
2. **The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under Section 231(b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.**

Funding has been and will continue be used for the support of the state's professional learning (PL) system for adult education, called Propel. With funds from NMHED-AE, Propel surveys and assesses the field on a regular basis and gathers information through regular meetings with

state office staff to identify PL needs in the state for all program staff and volunteers, maintains an online portal that tracks PL-related data, develops and provides professional learning in in-person, hybrid, and virtual modalities, and runs PL communities of practice. Propel is also developing a teacher induction series of courses and collaborating with NMHED-AE to help develop a teacher certification program. Leadership funding has been used to provide access for New Mexico AE practitioners to national professional development initiatives, including Advance IET and the LEAD Institute. NMHED co-sponsors an annual state conference for all Adult Education practitioners and workforce development partners. Professional development offerings, materials, and trainers are evaluated and the development of this evaluation system is ongoing at the time of this writing.

1. Strategic priority activities include:

- a. Continuing the development of a comprehensive, statewide Adult Education professional development system in New Mexico, Propel.
 - b. Creation of an Adult Education teacher induction and credential system.
 - c. Building and promoting internal (New Mexico) training and leadership capacity.
3. **The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including—(i) the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training; (ii) the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and (iii) assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.**

Funding will be used for the provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities, including development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training; the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies. Technical assistance of the nature described will primarily be provided in the context of Title II professional development and by state office staff and consultants as part of and resulting from local program monitoring activities.

Strategic priority activities include:

1. Providing responsive, effective technical assistance as part of and resulting from regular program monitoring activities, and on an as-needed basis to individual local providers based on performance and demographic or staff changes.
2. Continuing to maintain and improve the state's AE field-facing website, Propelnm.org, which provides access to policies and guidance, contact information, professional learning opportunities, and technical assistance through both materials and access to TA professionals in the field.

3. Providing the timely development and revision of all NMHED Adult Education policies and developing codified role-based guidance materials for key local program staff positions.
4. Collaborating with One Stop partners to provide both reciprocal training and joint professional development opportunities to enhance coordination and provide better support and service to students and clients.
4. **The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.**

Funding will be used to monitor the quality of/improvement in adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State. Monitoring activities are designed to ensure AEFLA grant compliance in ultimate service to improving student learning. Monthly desk audits, reporting requirements, informal inquiries, and formal local program site visits are the State's primary monitoring

vehicles. Monitoring site visits are performed according to a schedule determined by a Risk Assessment Tool, with frequency and duration determined by risk ratings from that Tool. Regardless of risk, NMHED is committed to visiting all local 26 Adult Education program providers at least once every four years for evaluation, learning, and support. Dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State also happens within the context of local program monitoring, where such models and promising practices may be shared in reference to an area the State determines the program needs to improve, or could further build upon. But such dissemination happens more generally and frequently within the context of professional development activities.

Strategic priority activities include:

1. Helping local programs understand and properly use the statewide performance accountability system that includes maintenance of a statewide information management system; core performance and other quality program indicators; a system for evaluating the effectiveness of Adult Education and literacy activities based on the performance measures; ongoing needs assessment; and identifying promising practices.
2. Incentivizing data-driven decision making and formalizing opportunities for local programs to analyze data for program improvement purposes.
3. Improving the efficacy and utility of local program site monitoring visits via strategic front-end requests and planned follow-up activities and improvements.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

While the following list of State Leadership activities are not required, Section 223 grants the State permission to use funds in order to support them. For the purposes of this Combined State Plan, NMHED has selected four (4) activities to include in its second tier of prioritized State Leadership activities. Priority permissible activities were selected on the basis of their critical supportive relationship to the goals and strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan, as well

as to their current contextual significance to the required State Leadership activities listed and addressed in the last subsection.

1. Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.
2. The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3).
3. Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.
4. The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessment tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, where appropriate, and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels.

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.

Local programs are required to enter and maintain performance and demographic data governed by the National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education. The eligible agency maintains a web-based system called LACES (Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System) from LiteracyPro to collect and track all data. NMHED-AE trains all designated local provider data technicians and monitors local program data collection and quality via regular desk audits, scheduled site monitoring visits, and required semiannual and annual reporting year.

Annual program evaluations and provision of data analysis tables on Propelnm.org address the extent to which service providers have implemented each of the required activities specified in Section 223 of WIOA and their outcomes in terms of student learning and progress toward education and career goals. Effectiveness at meeting or exceeding State-adjusted levels of performance of the core indicator success metrics is a major focus of the local program evaluation process, which is conducted using data-driven measurement of program effectiveness; identification of best practices and emerging needs; identification of staff needs as they relate to program effectiveness; and identification of trends and barriers that affect program outcome. Quantitative data is reported monthly and qualitative data is also reported annually at minimum and analyzed to inform agency priorities, support continuous improvement, and ensure required levels of performance are being met. If at any time a program is found to be out of compliance with Federal or State requirements, the provider may will receive technical assistance, may complete and act upon a performance enhancement plan (PEP), or may be placed on probation for up to one year as they fulfil a Corrective Action Plan.

Failure to comply with this plan may result in a reduction or removal of funding pursuant to State policy and procedure.

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

The State Plan must include	Include
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 WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
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

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the

undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

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

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
	New Mexico Higher Education Department
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
First Name	Amber
Last Name	Gallup
Title	Director, Adult Education Division
Email	amber.gallup@hed.nm.gov

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

GEPA Section 427 Instructions to State Applicants for their Subrecipient Applicants

The State grantee provides a subrecipient applicant seeking Federal assistance instructions and guidance for how it must comply with the GEPA Section 427 requirement. The State grantee determines the form and content of the information a subrecipient applicant must include in its application regarding the steps it proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, its local-level project or activity. For example:

- The State grantee may require its subrecipient applicant to use and submit the GEPA Section 427 form that it is required to submit to the Department; or
- The State grantee may use a State-developed form that is sufficient to meet the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- The State grantee maintains the subrecipient applicants' responses in the State office.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) recognizes the importance of equitable access to, and participation in, federally assisted programs for students, teachers, and those with special needs. GEPA Section 427 is addressed in the New Mexico AEFLA grant competition. All applicants are required to complete a GEPA sheet as part of their application. In that sheet, they are required to list relevant barriers to program participation and detail the measures they are taking or plan to take in order to address these barriers.

NMHED requires the Grantee to specifically agree to comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq); the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act of 1991; title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended; section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended; title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended; and with all applicable requirements.

**2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER
BENEFICIARIES?**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Potential barriers that can impede equitable access to and participation in these programs include systemic barriers related to gender, race, national origin, color, disability, and/or age.

**3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH
BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR
ACTIVITY?**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

We address potential barriers by providing guidance and professional development to our funded local programs on how to recognize and address barriers and accommodate individual students. We are creating a comprehensive policy on this topic as well and designing professional development opportunities around it. Through these steps, we encourage funded programs to:

- Ensure accessibility of facilities and programs for all students, teachers, and other stakeholders, but eliminating natural barriers for the enhancement of mobility and accessibility.
- Offer professional development for teaching students in an accessible environment.
- Provide curricular, instructional, and testing accommodations.
- Provide access to services such as occupational and physical therapy services, childcare, and transportation.
- When possible, utilize classroom assistants and tutors to enhance inclusionary practices.

Our local program providers are committed to equal opportunity for employees and work to actively recruit applicants from marginalized and minoritized groups and students with special needs and learning differences. All services must be provided in ADA accessible facilities. NMHED monitors GEPA Section 427 compliance issues as part of its monitoring process and works to provide relevant training for both staff and local program providers as part of its professional development system. At the state level, NMHED works with our WIOA partners to systematically identify and remove barriers to access. One project we are undertaking together is the development of a universal intake system that will help us streamline and provide more comprehensive and timely service to all New Mexicans and allow us to refer a client easily among the partner services and programs.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

NMHED Adult Education Division is completing a comprehensive policy for reducing barriers and providing access for students in Adult Education programs; it will be complete by June 2024. Additional professional development opportunities on how to implement our policy will also be available by June 2024. These are only in addition to guidance and professional learning opportunities on these topics that are already offered on an ongoing basis. We do not yet know when the universal intake system will be designed and operational for all partners, as we are not spearheading this project, but it is underway.

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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	38.0%	41.0%	39.0%	41.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%	41.0%	33.0%	41.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,400	\$4,600	\$4,500	\$4,700
Credential Attainment Rate	27.0%	31.0%	28.0%	32.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	38.0%	40.0%	38.5%	41.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

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.

1. 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

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, 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.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	2	8/2021
Parent Training and Information Center	1	6/2021
Client Assistance Program	Unlimited	8/2021
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	8/2023
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	7/2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	8/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	8/2023
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	8/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Unlimited	7/2023 7/2021
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the	Vacant	

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
State Workforce Development Board	1	8/2023
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	8/2023
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	8/2023

3. 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.

The SRC has 4 membership spots currently open due to term expirations and resignations. These include 3 vacancies from business, labor and industry and 1 for the state Public Education Department. Efforts at recruitment to fill these vacancies are ongoing. The SRC has established a membership committee, which has been tasked with monitoring membership and following up on recommendations for potential members. The SRC Chair and Vice Chair serve as points of contact for these recommendations and reach out directly to potential members to assist them in completing the state's application for council membership and to answer any questions the potential applicants may have. Once an application is submitted, the Chair or Vice Chair will then reach out directly to our contact with the Governor's office to inform them of the applicant and the SRC's interest in having the individual on the council. Regardless of the identified vacancies, the SRC does maintain a quorum of members and meets quarterly throughout the year in accordance with federal regulations and the council's bylaws. Special meetings may be called as needed to ensure timely action and response to state and federal reporting deadlines or activities.

4. 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.

Using the prior Customer Satisfaction Survey report and considering input from consumers and council members, these follow recommendations were established by the SRC for NMDVR during the September 21, 2023, council meeting. Responses from NMDVR will be included for ongoing review, discussion, and council input.

1. The SRC recommends that NMDVR staff and leadership continue to focus on enhancing communication with consumers to ensure that consumers understand where they are in the VR process as well as their status when receiving services under the IPE. Given feedback from consumers in the previous consumer satisfaction survey, this will be an area highlighted again

in the 2024 survey.

2. The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhances the partnership with NMTAP to ensure ongoing training on assistive technology (AT) needs and AT use is emphasized with agency job coaches and employers. The council further recommends that NMDVR continue to emphasize education of consumers on AT costs, resources, and accessibility so that they can more easily transition when, for example, school-provided tools are no longer available, or a reasonable accommodation needs to be requested.

3. The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services maintain a disability focus, and all new hires at NMDVR continue to participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, VR services and delivery options including consumer choice regarding employment outcomes, assistive technology, and the needs of specific disability populations.

4. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue discussions on trauma-informed care for VR field staff resulting from pandemics, natural disasters, and other traumatic events that staff or consumers may experience. It continues to be the council's belief that such training and discussions will help agency staff better address self-care and better assist consumers in navigating challenges and establishing effective natural supports.

5. The SRC continues to encourage NMDVR to move out of Order of Selection fully as soon as possible. Until the required steps for this can be completed, however, the SRC continues to recommend that NMDVR continue to keep the OOS lists clear and to serve individuals in all categories.

6. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maximize efforts to utilize available funding sources to ensure positive outcomes for consumers.

7. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to give attention to establishment of career ladder opportunities within the agency to increase retention of knowledgeable employees.

8. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue its ongoing efforts to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing VR training and counseling designed to enhance and improve job-seeking skills for NMDVR participants. The SRC further recommends that NMDVR continue to track and share this data with community partners, legislators, and other interested parties to reflect the true impact of agency services.

9. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to explore expanding PreETS services throughout the state.

10. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue their ongoing efforts to upgrade and update technology within all agency offices statewide to best support agency staff and consumers.

5. 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

1. The SRC recommends that NMDVR staff and leadership continue to focus on enhancing communication with consumers to ensure that consumers understand where they are in the VR process as well as their status when receiving services under the IPE. Given feedback from consumers in the previous consumer satisfaction survey, this will be an area highlighted again in the 2024 survey.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and continues to prioritize staff training to ensure enhanced and effective communication techniques through all steps of the vocational rehabilitation process. The agency will continue to emphasize individualized communication that best meets the consumer's needs in the coming year. The Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) has a Program Policy Instruction (PPI) on Case and Caseload Management, where field staff are instructed to maintain contact with everyone on a caseload at least monthly. This is reinforced through the case review process, where program managers audit random cases on each caseload each month to ensure proper follow-up is occurring throughout the entire VR process. Finally, RSU has partnered with technical assistance centers, including Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) and Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment Outcomes (VRTAC-QE), to provide training to management and field staff on how to succeed in transitioning from the "employment outcome" focus of the Workforce Investment Act to the "career pathway" paradigm required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

2. The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhances the partnership with NMTAP to ensure ongoing training on assistive technology (AT) needs and AT use is emphasized with agency job coaches and employers. The council further recommends that NMDVR continue to emphasize education of consumers on AT costs, resources, and accessibility so that they can more easily transition when, for example, school-provided tools are no longer available, or a reasonable accommodation needs to be requested.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will educate consumers, job coaches/developers, and employers on AT costs, resources, accessibility, and reasonable accommodations. NMDVR will continue to foster the agency's relationship with the NM Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) and utilize its services as a valuable resource. RSU has identified staff in each of the nine areas across the state to specialize their knowledge and professional development in assistive technology. These staff members are designated "AT liaisons," which means they are the point of contact in their area for all things AT. They are charged with sharing AT information and resources with their fellow field staff and, at a basic level, guide VRCs and participants when making AT purchase decisions. These AT liaisons typically attend the annual NMTAP conference to stay in the know on the latest AT trends and resources. NMDVR will continue to support RSU staff to attend the NMTAP conference each year.

3. The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services maintain a disability focus, and all new hires at NMDVR continue to participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, VR services and delivery options including

consumer choice regarding employment outcomes, assistive technology, and the needs of specific disability populations.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has created and hired a Staff Development Coordinator in 2023. An additional Staff Development training coordinator is also in the hiring process. This position will coordinate the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) for NMDVR, ensuring that personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. NMDVR personnel will then have the specialized training and experience enabling them to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment and to work effectively with employers who hire such individuals. NMDVR has invested in the subscription to YESLMS. This learning management system is developed from the VR Development Group. Professionals in the vocational rehabilitation industry create these trainings to include PhDs and experts in vocational rehabilitation with content created from various universities and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) staff. The learning management platform provides a library of training, including a five-part series on medical aspects of disability, encompassing mental health, body systems, and disorders. This resource provides an immediacy to training, learning, and understanding concepts in vocational rehabilitation for new and existing VR Counselors.

4. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue discussions on trauma-informed care for VR field staff resulting from pandemics, natural disasters, and other traumatic events that staff or consumers may experience. It continues to be the council's belief that such training and discussions will help agency staff better address self-care and better assist consumers in navigating challenges and establishing effective natural supports.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will explore options for staff training on trauma-informed care to better address employment-related issues due to COVID-19 and other traumatic effects individuals may have experienced. NMDVR has, during the past several years, provided staff access to training resources through the pandemic. The vocational rehabilitation industry has created and offered numerous valuable training courses to support VR professionals. These resources have focused curriculum on many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including professional self-care for VR professionals. NMDVR utilizes many of these trainings through VRTAC-QE, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Counseling, VRTAC-QM, the YESLMS platform, and others.

5. The SRC continues to encourage NMDVR to move out of Order of Selection fully as soon as possible. Until the required steps for this can be completed, however, the SRC continues to recommend that NMDVR continue to keep the OOS lists clear and to serve individuals in all categories.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has successfully eliminated the waitlist for services in 2022. NMDVR will remain on Order of Selection—with all categories open—to ensure a strong foundation is built related to budget and staffing.

6. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maximize efforts to utilize available funding sources to ensure positive outcomes for consumers.

The agency accepts this recommendation and will be initiating a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which will provide a critical assessment of the program related to strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Data obtained from this endeavor will provide the agency with a

unique lens related to where funding can be strategically invested to ensure quality service delivery, shore up service gaps, and better serve underserved populations. Additionally, the agency has been working with VRTAC-QM to upskill executive staff and other leadership related to fiscal forecasting in hopes that leadership can be better prepared to serve New Mexicans regardless of economic conditions.

7. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to give attention to establishment of career ladder opportunities within the agency to increase retention of knowledgeable employees.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will strongly consider and explore options for retention pay for all staff to enhance consistency, communication, and confidence in services. NMDVR will explore a mentorship program where senior staff are paired up with new staff to provide guidance and relationships as new staff onboard. This will cultivate a sense of “belonging” and encourage staff to stay at NMDVR as they are building long-lasting relationships. Additionally, the agency strives to appropriately compensate NMDVR employees for education and experience, based on budget availability.

8. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue its ongoing efforts to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing VR training and counseling designed to enhance and improve job-seeking skills for NMDVR participants. The SRC further recommends that NMDVR continue to track and share this data with community partners, legislators, and other interested parties to reflect the true impact of agency services.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has entered into technical assistance agreements with VRTAC- QM, VRTAC-QE, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) to develop long-term training platforms. This will support an increase in, and better-quality of, employment outcomes by training RSU staff and management on how accurate and complete data correlates to quality employment outcomes for NMDVR participants. NMDVR will focus on data reporting and validation in 2024, emphasizing streamlining and improving processes.

9. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to explore expanding PreETS services throughout the state.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will again partner with all American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs in New Mexico to implement Pre-ETS services. Jemez VR will work with NMDVR to reinstate Project Hope Transition work-based training Program. This model will be explored for other tribal agencies across the state. Discussions with the Jemez VR, Laguna Acoma VR, and Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS) have already begun in efforts to rebuild engagement by all vested parties after the pandemic. Other school districts within the Jemez Valley have been contacted to inquire about their interest in re-engaging Project HOPE. NMDVR has been in collaboration with National Project SEARCH and Molina Health Care to bring Project SEARCH to rural areas in NM. Tribal land in San Juan County is being explored and NMDVR is working with Kirtland Central School district to start a new site during FY 2024-25 in Shiprock. The following counties and schools are being explored for Project SEARCH to begin FY 25-26: Luna, Deming School District; Eddy, Carlsbad School District; Curry, Clovis/Portales School Districts. In addition, NMDVR is increasing the Transition unit to have a

total of 12 transition counselors to deliver pre-employment transition services 100% in the school districts assigned across the state. NMDVR will continue to review additional Pre-ETS contract proposals to provide the five core Pre-Employment Transition Services through 2024.

10. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue their ongoing efforts to upgrade and update technology within all agency offices statewide to best support agency staff and consumers.

NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has already begun efforts to upgrade and update technology in all 24 offices in the agency for 2024. The budget continues to be available for these upgrades. NMDVR will continue researching and discovering new technology items to better support the agency staff and participants.

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;

The agency completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) on February 28, 2024, which provided a critical assessment of the program related to strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Data obtained from this endeavor provided the agency with a unique lens related to where funding can be strategically invested to ensure quality service delivery, shore up service gaps, and better serve underserved populations. Additionally, the agency has been working with VRTAC-QM to upskill executive staff and other leadership related to fiscal forecasting in hopes that leadership can be better prepared to serve New Mexicans regardless of economic conditions.

1. Transportation was by far the most common need cited by all groups for individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. Public transportation in the rural areas is especially problematic and was characterized as nonexistent in most cases, and unreliable when it was available. The lack of transportation is a barrier to both employment and accessing NMDVR services.
2. The lack of broadband Internet access was cited as a barrier. The shift to remote work and communication resulting from the pandemic magnified how important reliable Internet access is for all individuals, and the lack of access in many rural areas of New Mexico prevents individuals with disabilities from accessing information necessary for job search and remote employment opportunities.

3. Assistive technology, job placement assistance, employment preparation services, work experience and behavioral health counseling were all cited repeatedly as rehabilitation needs of NMDVR customers.
4. Participants indicated that NMDVR serves a large population of individuals with behavioral health impairments, including mental health impairments and substance use disorders. The available treatment for this population was noted as severely lacking, especially outside of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Mental health counseling was noted as nearly non-existent in the rural areas of the state, which impacts the stability of individuals necessary for sustained employment.
5. Many NMDVR customers need supported employment (SE) services to maintain employment, but there are very few SE providers outside of the urban areas of the state. Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) are experiencing high vacancy rates and there are almost no SE providers in the rural areas of the state.
6. The fear of benefit loss, especially medical benefits, is a barrier to Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries returning to work or pursuing work at a self-sustaining level. Many NMDVR customers who are receiving either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pursue employment at the part-time level so they can augment their benefits, but not face losing them due to work. This results in many individuals working below their potential. NMDVR does provide benefits counseling, and this is helpful, but it has not made any significant impact on motivating beneficiaries to pursue employment at a level high enough for them to no longer need benefits.
7. Many Deaf customers have a need to develop their reading and language skills, but there are very few options for them in the state.
8. The need for affordable housing has become a major issue since the pandemic began in 2020. Interview participants in all groups indicated that the need to identify affordable housing options has become of paramount importance for NMDVR consumers.
9. Poverty is a significant concern for individuals with disabilities in New Mexico. The poverty rates in the state are consistently in the top three in the country, according to the US Census Bureau, and the effect of poverty on individuals with disabilities is disproportionate, according to several partners and staff interviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, including their need for Supported Employment area:

1. NMDVR is encouraged to examine creative ways to address the transportation barrier in rural areas of the state. One possibility is to utilize ride-share services such as Uber or Lyft when available. Ride-share services also provides an opportunity for former or current consumers of VR to engage in part-time employment, so if they can be recruited and supported to be drivers, this strategy can act as a way to build capacity in the rural areas.
2. NMDVR is encouraged to conduct connectivity assessments for all consumers engaged in the comprehensive assessment process for plan development. When needed, VR should purchase the necessary equipment and services to ensure their participants are able to effectively access and function in the digital world. This includes broadband internet where available and laptops, cell phones, and hotspots in cellular service plans. One possibility for adaptation is the BPD Technology Assessment Checklist created by the Technology Committee for the association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. NMDVR should adapt the tool for its own needs.
3. Because of the positive working relationship that NMDVR has with the Centers for Independent Living in the state, the agency is encouraged to identify CILs where partnership can be further developed and CILs can be recruited to become service providers. Increases in the ability to live independently are positively associated with successful employment outcomes, so enhancing IL services for consumers is an important goal for NMDVR.
4. NMDVR is encouraged to further its partnership with the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) of the Human Services Department in New Mexico. BHSD offers an array of services and support that are helpful for NMDVR consumers.
5. The rate of consumers served by NMDVR that have either a primary or co-occurring disability of substance abuse necessitates that VR staff and partners increase collaboration and partnerships with other state and community organizations that serve youth and adults in recovery. NMDVR is encouraged to share expertise and resources with recovery programs and provide training to counselors and providers on ways to help consumers address the multiple dimensions of recovery that include:
 - a. Planning for physical and emotional health;
 - b. Helping the individual identify resources to ensure that they have a safe and supportive living environment;
 - c. Assisting the individual to have hope, often as a result of a sense of purpose which can frequently be established through the pursuit of meaningful employment; and
 - d. Providing the individual with resources that can help establish a support network and build a sense of community.

The dimensions of recovery noted above are also applicable to individuals with mental health impairments and are recognized as a standard of effective counseling and treatment by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found here:

6. NMDVR is encouraged to work with Deaf advocates and service programs to further develop Deaf and Hard of Hearing services in the southern half of the state. In addition, NMDVR is encouraged to develop a communication and language skills training program for the Deaf to address the language development needs of this population throughout the state.
7. A large percentage of NMDVR consumers are SSA beneficiaries whose fear of benefit loss affects their return-to-work behavior. Although NMDVR has Benefits Advisors, it would be helpful for the agency to augment these services with training for staff and providers on strategies that contribute to the pursuit of work above the level of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), including self-sufficiency. These interventions and strategies include:
 - a. Establishing and reinforcing high expectations for the individual;
 - b. Identifying role models, or peer mentors who will model positive behavior and provide a positive “push” for individuals to achieve their maximum potential (The positive push can come from the rehabilitation counselor if there are no family members, friends, or mentors available);
 - c. Maximizing the individual’s ability to live and function independently;
 - d. Reinforcing the need for tenacity and persistence by the individual by helping them develop resiliencies, then providing constant support and positive feedback;
 - e. Ongoing benefits planning and plans for overpayments when work occurs. Overpayments are planned for and the individual or the Benefits Planner is aware enough to calculate the effect of wages on benefits and set aside money that will likely occur from a result of overpayments for future payback to SSA;
 - f. Pursuing higher education at the highest possible level for the individual; and
 - g. Work experience, internships, or any exposure to work in the beneficiary’s field of choice.
8. NMDVR is encouraged to ensure that their staff has access to affordable housing resources for consumers. One option is found at https://www.hud.gov/states/new_mexico/renting.
9. NMDVR is encouraged to help consumers address poverty concerns through short-term and long-term strategies such as assisting customers in obtaining “survival employment” while supporting long-term training for in-demand high-paying jobs.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of individuals with disabilities from different ethnic groups, including individuals who have been potentially unserved or underserved by NMDVR:

1. Native Americans with disabilities were cited the most frequently as a population of people that may be potentially underserved by NMDVR. This is in part due to the large number of tribes in the state. NMDVR does have has a working relationship with the tribal VR programs in the state, but the depth of the relationship has been affected by the pandemic and the turnover of staff at both NMDVR at the TVR programs. The number of shared cases between the tribal programs and NMDVR was cited as very low and in need of growth over the next year as staffing patterns stabilize and liaisons assigned by NMDVR establish working relationships with each tribe.
2. Rural areas of the state were cited as underserved due to lack of access to transportation and other services. While the capacity to connect by distance increased during the pandemic, the lack of broadband access in rural areas means that that they were not able to benefit from remote possibilities to the same extent as those living in urban areas.
3. Hispanic individuals were noted as being potentially underserved. This was noted as primarily occurring because of the lack of bilingual counselors in NMDVR.
4. Based on disability, the one group that was noted as possibly being underserved was Deaf individuals. This was related to the lack of counselors who can sign and the general lack of interpreters in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities from Different Ethnic Groups, including needs of Individuals who have been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program area:

1. NMDVR is encouraged to establish regular and consistent meetings with tribal VR programs across the state. This helps establish and demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and should help to increase shared cases, increase communication, understanding, and awareness of each agency's services.
2. As resources allow, NMDVR is encouraged to sponsor their staff that work with the 121 programs to attend the annual Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) conference.
3. NMDVR and the 121 programs are encouraged to provide regular cross-training for staff from both agencies. This is especially important given the frequency of staff turnover on both sides.
4. NMDVR is encouraged to establish liaison relationships with community agencies serving Deaf individuals and Hispanic individuals in New Mexico as a way to develop awareness of NMDVR services and increase referrals. In addition, NMDVR is encouraged to recruit and hire bilingual staff in ASL and Spanish whenever they have an open position.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The following information was gathered from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System:

1. NMDVR consumers are frequently referred to the New Mexico Workforce Connection (Titles I and III) centers for job search assistance and resume writing workshops. The workshops are helpful for consumers, but job development services were described as self-initiated and online, so were less impactful on individuals with disabilities needing one-on-one assistance.
2. While the workshops are helpful, the relationship between NMDVR and the Workforce Connection centers is one of referral primarily. There are few cases where funding for training is shared between agencies.
3. Co-location of NMDVR within the Workforce Connection offices was described as beneficial to the relationship between the two agencies and staff says it helps with ensuring individuals with disabilities are quickly connected to the services and supports, they need.
4. Workforce Connection staff need training on how to work with individuals with disabilities and they need working and up-to-date assistive technology for job seekers who need this technology to access programs. Deaf interpreters were also cited as needed in the Workforce Connection offices.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following recommendations are offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System area:

1. NMDVR should identify and share examples of shared funding of cases throughout the state to encourage replication of these cases.
2. NMDVR is encouraged to work with the Workforce Connection staff to develop apprenticeships and customized training programs in high demand occupations that include individuals with disabilities.
3. NMDVR and the Workforce Connection center staff should provide regular and consistent cross-training to staff in order to improve the number of individuals with disabilities who are effectively accessing and benefitting from services at the centers.
4. NMDVR is encouraged to strengthen its relationship with the Title I Youth program to provide training and placement opportunities for students and youth with disabilities.

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.

The following recurring themes emerged related to the needs of youth with disabilities in transition:

1. The needs of youth and students with disabilities are similar to adults served by NMDVR except that youth are noted as needing more work experience and soft skills.
2. NMDVR transition counselors, have helped develop relationships with schools and increase pre-employment transition services.
3. Project SEARCH sites were applauded for their impact on students, especially because they provide work experience for students and youth, which was identified as an important need.
4. The relationship between NMDVR and schools across the state varies in intensity. Some schools are very involved with the agency and services are coordinated and working well, in others, NMDVR does not go into the school and VR services are not getting to students until they are close to graduation or after. The pandemic stalled the progress in the relationship between NMDVR and schools, especially in those areas where there has been turnover of NMDVR staff and school staff. As staff are hired and relationships reestablished, progress has picked up and services are increasing.
5. All five required pre-employment transition services were noted as important and helpful for students with disabilities. Work-based learning opportunities were identified by all as the most important of the five required services and NMDVR has worked to increase the availability of these work based learning opportunities across the State.
6. Youth succeed at higher rates when parents are engaged in the process. Lack of parent engagement can result in youth not accessing services early or “falling through the cracks.” Parents were described as essential to the transition process, helping youth to understand their disability and to developing realistic vocational expectations. Focus group and interview participants indicated that there is a need to engage with parents and keep them involved in transition efforts.
7. Parents of youth who receive SSI were often characterized as fearful of their children losing benefits and this adversely affects the motivation of the youth to work. In addition, if the youth does attempt to work, parents may not be supportive, which can lead to an unsuccessful work attempt.
8. NMDVR has good working relationships with community colleges and universities throughout the state. These positive relationships result in a smoother transition from secondary to postsecondary education, reasonable accommodation needs being met, and increased rates of persistence and success for youth and students with disabilities. Although the overall number of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education dropped during the pandemic from PY 2020-21, the numbers increased again in PY 2022 as schools reopened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided to NMDVR, related to the needs of youth with disabilities in transition:

1. NMDVR is encouraged to establish more work-based learning opportunities as part of its expansion of pre-employment transition services across the state. The agency has been working closely with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and schools to expand these opportunities and should continue these efforts as resources and capacity of CRPs allow.
2. NMDVR is encouraged to replicate Project SEARCH programs as resources allow. NMDVR staff and community partner agencies indicated that these programs are innovative and significantly impact the employability of participants.
3. NMDVR is encouraged to continue to work with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) and VRTAC-QM to increase and improve relationships with schools and improve tracking and reporting of pre-employment transition services.
4. As the number of transition counselors increases through future hiring, NMDVR is encouraged to expand its outreach and education of families of students receiving SSI to help assuage the fear of benefit loss and encourage the work-seeking behavior of these youth.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The recommendations offered to NMDVR, are based on the results from the most current CSNA.

The following themes were recurring from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs serving individuals with disabilities in New Mexico:

1. The pandemic significantly impacted staffing at service providers agencies, with shortages noted in most geographic areas and services. Consequently, the wait for services has increased and the need to establish and develop services offered by CRPs is pervasive.
2. There is a need to establish all VR services and service providers in the rural areas of the state.
3. There is a significant need for SE providers throughout the state.
4. There is a need for NMDVR to examine its current rate structure for purchased services. Partners indicate that the current fee schedule is insufficient to meet their needs for service provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendation is offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs in New Mexico:

1. NMDVR should examine its current rates for purchased services and the past methodology for how these rates were established. This will determine if rate revisions are needed and if the methodology is adequate given the changing landscape of staffing and service delivery since the pandemic. The agency is encouraged to work with the fiscal team at the VRTAC-QM as needed for technical assistance in this area.
2. NMDVR is encouraged to consider using the Establishment Authority to help establish SE and other service providers over the course of the next State Plan cycle. The need for these services is clearly evident from all staff and partners interviewed for this CSNA.
3. NMDVR is encouraged to establish a provider network meeting at least semi-annually to share information, increase communication, and enhance the partnership between NMDVR and service providers.
4. If VR services are unable to be developed, then NMDVR is encouraged to consider bringing services in-house by hiring individuals with specialized skills in the given area (e.g. job placement, assessment, supported employment).

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

The State Rehabilitation Council was actively involved with development of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The overall major themes identified as a result of the CSNA: the impact of the pandemic and increasing applications; NMDVR staff consistently characterized as caring and committed to helping individuals with disabilities in New Mexico to prepare for and obtain employment despite, staff shortages; New Mexico passing all of its WIOA Performance Measures for PY22; difficulty with recruitment of VR staff based on low wages; a need for increased community awareness of NMDVR and its services; a need for more staff development opportunities, especially related to behavioral health and criminal backgrounds; the need for an increase in the use of self-employment due to the ruralness of the state; and the loss of individuals after application prior to plan. Finally, NMDVR— in combination with the New Mexico Commission for the Blind— received monitoring under Section 107 for failure to expend the 15% reserve requirement in Federal Fiscal Year 20 for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Goal 1: The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is set to align its efforts

with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) themes over the next three years, aiming for measurable outcomes through targeted strategies.

To enhance staff capabilities, NMDVR will provide training on data validation and improve data reporting for WIOA Performance Measures. Ensuring appropriate salary placement and hiring two Staff Development Coordinators for ongoing training will support continuous staff improvement.

NMDVR plans to integrate AI technology, demonstrating it to field staff in 2024 and piloting various platforms to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

To increase applicants and client engagement, NMDVR will launch a marketing campaign and implement rapid engagement strategies, ensuring clients remain actively involved in their rehabilitation journey.

Quality assurance is key, with regular reviews and audits to verify all activities are completed before case closure. NMDVR will also partner with the NM Commission for the Blind to address monitoring on the Section 107 Corrective Action Plan.

Progress will be tracked through measurable goals, monitoring the implementation of improved policies and training (outputs), and assessing their impact on employment rates and participant satisfaction (outcomes).

Through these efforts, NMDVR aims to significantly improve service delivery and outcomes over the next three years, meeting client needs with high standards of care and innovation.

Goal 2: NMDVR is dedicated to providing customized employment training through the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). This initiative aims to develop skilled job developers and coaches among new hires at NMDVR and staff at Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). Each year, the program ensures that at least 15 NMDVR staff and 25 CRP and vendor staff complete the training.

To measure progress, NMDVR will track both outputs and outcomes. Outputs will include monitoring the number of staff trained annually to meet the target numbers. Outcomes will focus on the impact of training on employment for individuals with disabilities, assessing job placement quality, retention rates, and satisfaction levels among employers and employees.

Data collection will be thorough, with records of training sessions and regular surveys and interviews with participants. Key employment metrics will be tracked to measure success. Annual reports will summarize training numbers and outcomes, highlighting successes and areas for improvement. Feedback loops will ensure the program adapts based on participant feedback.

NMDVR is committed to continuous improvement, regularly updating the training curriculum and engaging with stakeholders to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Through this approach, NMDVR aims to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes for individuals with

disabilities.

Goal 3: New Mexico faces a significant challenge with a limited number of long-term support providers statewide. The Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) oversees various waiver programs, each functioning as its own department, including the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver and the Mi Via (My Way) waiver. The Mi Via program is unique in that it allows participants or their guardians to self-direct services, enabling them to hire service providers of their choice, such as ongoing job coaches.

Currently, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DD Waiver program. In an effort to enhance service coordination, NMDVR is in discussions to establish a similar MOU with the Mi Via program. The goal of these discussions is to ensure a smooth transition for participants from NMDVR to the Mi Via waiver service provider.

Key topics under discussion include the possibility of NMDVR contracting with the same job coaches to facilitate smoother transitions from short-term to long-term funding. Additionally, there is an emphasis on conducting background checks for all service providers to ensure participant safety. NMDVR is also considering providing customized employment training for service providers to better support the unique needs of participants. Another important topic is the standardization of hourly rates for job coaching services to ensure consistency and fairness across the board.

To measure progress and success, NMDVR aims to establish the MOU by the end of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024. The success of this initiative will be evaluated through specific outputs and outcomes. Outputs will include the finalization of the MOU and the number of coordinated service agreements established with job coaches and service providers. Outcomes will focus on enhanced continuity of care, improved employment retention rates for participants, and participant satisfaction with the transition process.

Through these efforts, NMDVR and DDSD aim to improve the quality and continuity of care for participants, ensuring they receive consistent and effective support as they navigate between services.

Goal 4: **NMDVR's New Project SEARCH Site Initiative**

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is launching a new Project SEARCH site for out-of-school youth who were previously on the Developmental Disabilities (DD) waitlist. This initiative aims to provide training and employment opportunities to those who missed participating in Project SEARCH during their school years. The goal is to have the site operational by 2026, with additional sites being explored across New Mexico. The initiative has received support from the New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), which has requested an informational presentation for Program Year 2023.

To measure progress and success, NMDVR will focus on both outputs and outcomes. Outputs include establishing the new site by 2026, tracking the number of youth enrolling and

completing the program annually, and documenting the exploration and development of additional sites. Outcomes will measure employment rates of participants post-completion, participant and employer satisfaction, and long-term retention and career advancement.

This initiative seeks to empower out-of-school youth with essential training and employment opportunities, addressing their immediate needs and fostering sustained employment and career growth. By tracking these metrics, NMDVR is committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of these individuals and the broader community in New Mexico.

Goal 5: The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), partnering with the New Mexico Behavioral Planning Council and the Behavioral Health Collaborative, is set to amend state Medicaid regulations to allow Supported Employment funds for individuals with mental health diagnoses. This change is targeted for completion by March 2025, with implementation beginning in January 2026.

To measure progress, NMDVR will focus on key outputs and outcomes. The primary outputs include achieving the regulatory amendment by March 2025, making the funds available by January 2026, and tracking the number of individuals accessing these funds.

Outcomes will be monitored by assessing employment rates of those utilizing the funds, conducting satisfaction surveys with participants and employers, and tracking long-term job retention and career progression.

This initiative aims to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with mental health diagnoses, ensuring better job stability and career growth.

Goal 6: NMDVR is working towards a transformative initiative to expand Supported Employment funding to include individuals with mental health diagnoses. This effort, in collaboration with the New Mexico Behavioral Planning Council and the Behavioral Health Collaborative, targets a regulatory change by March 2025, with funding availability following approximately 10 months later and full implementation set for January 2026.

To ensure the success of this initiative, NMDVR will implement a comprehensive performance measurement framework that will track both outputs and outcomes. The outputs will include the number of stakeholder engagements, the drafting and submission of regulatory proposals, the number of training sessions conducted for service providers, and the distribution of guidance materials. Each of these outputs represents a critical step towards achieving the regulatory change and preparing for its implementation.

The outcomes, reflecting the broader impact of the initiative, will be measured by the increased access to supported employment services for individuals with mental health diagnoses, changes in employment rates among these individuals, job retention rates, and stakeholder satisfaction levels. By tracking these outcomes, NMDVR will be able to assess the effectiveness of the new funding in improving employment opportunities and support for this population.

NMDVR will employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to measure

progress and evaluate success. Surveys and questionnaires will be used to gather feedback from service providers and beneficiaries, while administrative data analysis will track service usage, employment outcomes, and retention rates. Additionally, focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders will provide in-depth insights into the program's impact and operational challenges.

Quarterly progress reviews will generate reports highlighting achievements, challenges, and areas needing adjustment. These reports will be shared with the New Mexico Behavioral Planning Council, the Behavioral Health Collaborative, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure transparency and collective accountability.

Through diligent monitoring of outputs and outcomes, NMDVR aims to not only achieve the regulatory change and funding implementation but also to significantly enhance employment opportunities and support for individuals with mental health diagnoses. This initiative represents a critical step towards fostering greater inclusion and support within the workforce for this vulnerable population.

Goal 7: Initiating Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) Program for Individuals Receiving Behavioral Health Services

NMDVR is launching a transformative initiative to implement the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) program for individuals receiving behavioral health services. This initiative will focus on comprehensive training, strategic vendor partnerships, and dedicated staffing to ensure successful employment outcomes.

To begin, NMDVR will provide intensive training for both its staff and the staff of behavioral health service vendors. This training will cover the IPS process thoroughly, equipping personnel with the skills and knowledge required to support individuals with behavioral health needs effectively. Additionally, NMDVR will develop formal contracts with various behavioral health service vendors, creating a robust network of support across the state. Dedicated NMDVR staff will be assigned to oversee and manage the IPS program, ensuring focused leadership and coordination.

The initiative aims to achieve several critical outputs. A key goal is to amend Medicaid law to include Supported Employment services for individuals with a mental health diagnosis. This legislative change will secure sustainable funding and support for the IPS program. Additionally, establishing and maintaining ongoing contracts with behavioral health service vendors statewide will ensure consistent delivery of IPS services.

The IPS program is designed to deliver significant outcomes. One of the primary objectives is to increase employment rates among individuals with behavioral health needs by providing tailored support. Participants will experience improved job placements and career progression, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and stability. Continuous support will be offered to individuals on the job, fostering long-term success and retention. The program's success will also demonstrate its potential applicability to other populations, potentially leading to broader implementation.

To measure progress and gauge achievement, NMDVR will implement a comprehensive evaluation framework. Key performance indicators will include assessing the effectiveness of training, tracking the number and quality of vendor contracts, monitoring progress towards Medicaid law amendments, and evaluating employment metrics. Long-term job support will be assessed through follow-up surveys and retention rates, and the feasibility of program expansion will be analyzed based on outcomes and success rates.

Through these efforts, NMDVR aims to achieve better employment outcomes for individuals with behavioral health needs and pave the way for the potential expansion of the IPS program to other populations.

Goal 8: NMDVR will continue its collaboration with Carlsbad ARC (CARC) to conduct 511 annual meetings aimed at providing individuals earning sub-minimum wages the opportunity to apply for NMDVR services and pursue competitive, integrated employment. To ensure the effectiveness of this initiative, progress will be meticulously measured and the achievement of the goal will be thoroughly gauged.

The progress of this goal will be tracked by recording the number of 511 annual meetings conducted in partnership with CARC. Detailed documentation will be maintained for each meeting, including attendance records to confirm that individuals earning sub-minimum wages are given the chance to learn about and apply for NMDVR services. Furthermore, the number of individuals who apply for these services as a direct result of attending the meetings will be monitored. Additionally, the number of those who successfully transition to competitive, integrated employment will be carefully tracked.

The outputs of this goal include the total number of 511 annual meetings conducted, the attendance of individuals earning sub-minimum wages at these meetings, and the number of applications submitted for NMDVR services following the meetings.

The anticipated outcomes are multifaceted. Firstly, there will be an increased awareness and engagement among individuals earning sub-minimum wages about the opportunities provided by NMDVR. This should lead to a higher rate of applications for NMDVR services. Ultimately, the goal is to see a significant increase in the number of individuals obtaining competitive, integrated employment, which will serve as a testament to the effectiveness of the 511 annual meetings and the services provided by NMDVR.

Regular reviews of meeting records, application data, and employment outcomes will be conducted to evaluate progress. Quarterly reports will be generated to assess whether the targets are being met and to identify any areas that may require improvement. Through this systematic tracking and evaluation, NMDVR aims to ensure that its partnership with CARC is successful in enhancing employment opportunities for individuals earning sub-minimum wages, thereby facilitating their better integration into the workforce.

Goal 9: The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is focused on utilizing Workforce Connection apprenticeship programs to provide training for individuals with

significant disabilities and those requiring Supported Employment.

NMDVR will establish partnerships with these programs, customizing training modules to ensure they are accessible and supportive. Enrollment of individuals with disabilities will be tracked to gauge the initiative's reach. Comprehensive support services such as job coaching and mentorship will be provided, with their range and frequency documented.

Outcomes will be measured through pre- and post-program evaluations to assess employment readiness, tracking employment placements and job retention. Participant and employer feedback will be collected to understand satisfaction and program effectiveness.

A robust tracking system will be implemented, involving regular data collection, quarterly progress reports, and stakeholder meetings. This continuous improvement process will ensure the programs are effective and responsive.

NMDVR aims to create meaningful and sustainable apprenticeship opportunities, leading to successful employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

Goal 10: NMDVR will explore options to increase transportation and work opportunities for individuals facing transportation barriers. This includes improving access to the internet, promoting remote work, and supporting self-employment. To ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives, NMDVR will measure the number of initiatives or programs implemented to improve transportation options, number of individuals provided with internet access or remote work opportunities, and the number of individuals supported in self-employment ventures. Through this, NMDVR will increase employment rates of individuals who previously faced transportation barriers, participant satisfaction with the new transportation and work options, and long-term job retention and success in self-employment for these individuals.

Goal 11: NMDVR has placed a focus on unserved or underserved ethnic groups. In the past year, the agency has developed Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions and completed three Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in program year 2023 with the following American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Programs (AIVRPs): Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS), Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR), and Laguna Acoma Connections (LAC). Quarterly meetings are held with all three programs, and each AIVRP is represented on the State Rehabilitation Council. Additionally, training opportunities are offered to their staff.

NMDVR will prioritize support for its staff to attend the Annual Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Conference. The agency has also partnered with the Interwork Institute, San Diego State University Research Foundation, to participate in the Activities for Underserved Populations grant.

Progress will be measured by the number of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions developed, number of MOUs completed with AIVRPs, frequency of quarterly meetings with AIVRPs, participation rates of AIVRP representatives on the State Rehabilitation Council, number of training sessions offered to AIVRP staff, attendance rates of NMDVR staff at the

CANAR Conference, becoming members of CANAR, and participation in the Activities for Underserved Populations grant. The goal will be to improve employment rates among individuals from unserved or underserved ethnic groups, increase satisfaction and engagement among AIVRP partners, enhance skills and knowledge among NMDVR and AIVRP staff, and ensure long-term retention and career progression of individuals from these ethnic groups.

Goal 12: NMDVR will continue to explore options for increasing services to students with disabilities by partnering with the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and the Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS). Recently, two staff members from Career and Technical Education (CTE) and a staff member from DWS accompanied the NMDVR Director to attend the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) 2023 Fall Conference. Additionally, the PED CTE Director has been recommended to represent PED on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and DWS staff who attended CSAVR also represent their agency on the SRC.

NMDVR is working closely with PED and DWS, along with Centers for Independent Living (CILs), to implement a Disability Innovation Fund Grant that PED applied for and received. Furthermore, PED has established a new state Office of Special Education. NMDVR is ensuring a strong partnership between the Office of Special Education, NMDVR, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) in implementing the Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement signed by both agencies. NMDVR has increased the number of dedicated Transition Staff to thirteen and elevated the program to a stand-alone department under the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU).

To ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives, NMDVR will measure the number of partnerships established and maintained with PED, DWS, and CILs, attendance and participation rates of PED and DWS staff at relevant conferences and meetings, number of initiatives implemented under the Disability Innovation Fund Grant, number of dedicated Transition Staff and the establishment of the stand-alone department, frequency and effectiveness of collaboration between NMDVR, PED, the Office of Special Education, and NTACT. Through these efforts, NMDVR will improve service delivery and increased employment rates for students with disabilities, achieve higher satisfaction rates among students, parents, and educators with the services provided, enhance skills and knowledge among NMDVR, PED, and DWS staff through joint initiatives and training, and ensure long-term retention and success of students with disabilities in the workforce.

Goal 13: To increase business engagement, four Business Outreach Coordinator positions were established in program year 2022. These coordinators are tasked with meeting staff from other states to learn about their approaches to business engagement, developing training and technical assistance for employers regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), inclusion, and tax credits, and creating resources for internal staff use. The Business Outreach Team works closely with the Department of Workforce Solutions, participating in its employer engagement activities to maximize each program's effectiveness and minimize duplication of efforts. Additionally, Business Outreach Coordinators are active on a national level, participating in the National Employment Team (NET) and the NET Summit.

To evaluate effectiveness, NMDVR will measure the number of business engagement strategies and practices identified from other states, the development and dissemination of training and technical assistance materials for employers, and the creation of resources for internal staff.

This will result in increased employer engagement and awareness of ADA, inclusion, and available tax credits, improved employment rates and job retention for individuals with disabilities, higher satisfaction rates among employers regarding the support and resources provided, and enhanced collaboration between NMDVR and the Department of Workforce Solutions.

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;
- B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;
- 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, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND
- D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

1. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to the growing population of older workers, many of whom may be unable to retain work in a field different from current occupations.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to serving the increasing population of older workers who continue working beyond age 65. In addition, many workers in this population do not plan on retiring. These older workers will require intensive training to remain employed.

2. Enhancing employment outcomes for youth and students with disabilities requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes appropriate vocational rehabilitation services, which not only focus on job skills training but also include personalized support and adaptive technologies.
3. Tailored educational training is crucial in equipping these individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge that align with current market demands. Furthermore, ongoing support and counseling play a pivotal role in helping them navigate workplace

challenges and retain employment. By fostering partnerships with employers and educational institutions, we can create inclusive work environments and educational settings that are conducive to their growth. Such collaborations can also raise awareness and facilitate the integration of these youth into diverse workplaces

Agency Response: The agency is committed to serving the increasing growth of youth and students with disabilities. Pre-employment services, educational training, and support programs will better ensure employment outcomes are reached by youth and students with disabilities.

OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

1. Barrier: Limited number of CRPs and independent job developers and job coaches.

Strategies:

A. Increase the use of assistive technology to reduce the need for long-term job coaching; work with CRPs to expand to areas outside of the major metropolitan areas; recruit former CRP employees, school personnel, social workers, retired VR staff, etc. to become self-employed and vendors of NMDVR.

B. Increase the contract rates to CRPs for job development and job coaching services to enable them to pay more than minimum wage and create an income source that is not leaving the CRP to operate at a deficit.

C. Collaborate with Medicaid's Community Benefits Programs vendors to coordinate the two programs and services for dual participants.

D. Work with the DDS Mi Via Program to train and certify the participants' chosen providers and to determine whether NMDVR can work with them to expand and create either a CRP or a small business to be an independent vendor.

2. Barrier: No funding for supported employment services for individuals who have a mental health diagnosis.

Strategies:

1. Work with the New Mexico State Legislature, Department of Health, Behavioral Health Services Division of the Human Services Department, Behavioral Health Collaborative, and Behavioral Health Planning Council to amend the NM Medicaid statute.
2. Upon changing the Medicaid statute, work with behavioral health agencies to institute cooperative agreements and initiate using the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) program.

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, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES).

1. Measurement Goal: Maintain requirements and annual reporting for PED MOU. Report on progress of Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement with PED.

2.Measurement Goal: Partner with NM Commission for the Blind to provide regular Section 107 Corrective Action Plan updates and spending of the 15% Pre-Employment Transition Services reserve requirement.

3.Measurement Goal: Explore additional areas in New Mexico for Project SEARCH sites. Report areas explored and outcomes of exploration.

4.Measurement Goal: Continue meeting or exceeding WIOA Performance Indicators.

Provide standardized internal training opportunities for NMDVR staff via internal training team. Report on number of staff by title that complete standardized internal training.

Partner with VRTAC-QE to offer staff training on specialized training needs including behavioral health, criminal background, and self-employment. Report on number of staff by title that complete specialized training.

5.Measurement Goal: Explore options for alternative transportation, including ride share services. Report number of individuals receiving support for transportation, remote work, and self-employment.

6.Measurement Goal: Maintain requirements and quarterly reporting for American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program (AIVRP) MOUs. Report by title the attendee(s) to the annual CANAR Conference. Share findings from participation in Interwork Institute, San Diego State University Research Foundation to participate in the Activities for Underserved Populations grant.

7.Measurement Goal: Report number and title of training created by Business Outreach Coordinators. Report by title the attendee(s) to the annual NET Summit. Provide updates on activities that support maximization of each program's services and minimizing duplication. Develop a methodology for tracking employer engagement and outcomes.

8.Measurement Goal: Report 15 NMDVR staff by title and 25 CRP staff by title who complete customized employment training each program year via the UCEDD.

9.Measurement Goal: Update and initiate MOU with DDS Waiver including Mi Via Waiver.

10.Measurement Goal: Continue to serve on the New Mexico Behavioral Planning Council and the Behavioral Health Collaborative. Participate in supportive activities to encourage the use of Medicaid funds to support long term services. Report on progress of initiative.

11.Measurement Goal: Upon change of Medicaid regulation, provide support to the Behavioral Health Services Division to implement an Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) Program. Report on progress of IPS program.

12.Measurement Goal: Report on number of individuals receiving 511 counseling.

13.Measurement Goal: Report on number of apprenticeship and training programs utilized by individuals with the most significant disabilities or those who require supported employment.

14.Measurement Goal: Report number of referrals from DDS and number of open cases with NMDVR via the DDS Want-to-Work program. Replicate this reporting when program is initiated in Mi Via Waiver program.

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;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

State Plan Modifications 2022 Submission:

- DVR is currently co-located at the Albuquerque one-stop office and is fully integrated in the one-stop's daily operations. DVR plans to co-locate in the Farmington and Santa Fe one-stop offices by the end of PY20.

PY2022 Update: Completed. NMDVR offices in both Farmington, NM and Santa Fe, NM are now co-located with the one-stop office.

- Enable businesses and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other human resource assistance including Skill-to-Work programs, pre-screening applicants, offering rooms for job fairs and interviewing, and consultant services, which are Agency specific such as ADA Training and disability etiquette training for existing employees.-

PY2022 Update: Ongoing activity. The Business Outreach Unit will be providing training and education in the areas identified. This unit was recently developed and will provide regional supports to employers across the state.

- Expand workforce services for individuals at all levels and skill of experience.

PY2022 Update: Ongoing activity. Rehabilitation Services Unit continues to work with participants to support competitive integrated employment and careers that will provide longevity with employers. Efforts to coordinate with workforce partners, colleges, community resources will integrate a support system to skill up VR participants and prepare them for employment.

- Train one-stop staff on the basic eligibility requirements for DVR throughout the state.

PY2022 Update: Ongoing activity. NMDVR training staff have provided several courses to the one-stop centers in educating employees about the services offered through VR. These trainings have been provided in the onboarding process for Department of Workforce Solutions managers, presentations to the NM Works program, SL Start, and other core partners. Training efforts will continue with one-stop staff as requested.

- Utilize the integrated nature of one-stop centers to increase customer participation and engage, support local businesses, and strengthen partnerships.-

PY2022 Update: This continues to be a goal of the agency and ongoing activity. Many of the one-stop centers have now returned to providing a full scope of services after the pandemic. This will allow for more involvement by VR participants and staff.

- Continue to work with local one-stop centers to obtain physical and programmatic accessibility assessments to ensure each center is meeting modern accessibility standards to individuals of all skills levels and abilities as required in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as well as Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.-

PY2022 Update: This is an on-going activity, and progress has been made. Several one-stop centers have sought accessibility assessments to identify deficits and/ or limitations to access both physical and assistive technology.

- Work collaboratively with State and Local Workforce Development Boards to establish and maintain the one-stop delivery system. This includes jointly funding the one-stop infrastructure costs through partner contributions. DVR has Agency representatives on each of the four Workforce Development Boards.

PY2022 Update: Completed. NMDVR has established co-location in several locations with the one-stop, but and also provides support to costs associated with the required partner contributions.

- Goals for continued Service to Students and Youth with Disabilities and Supported Employment:
New Mexico Division Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has implemented several intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) and/or Memoranda of Agreement (MOU) in cooperation with other state agencies including the Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Support Division (DDSD), Center for Development and Disabilities (CDD), New Mexico Public Education (PED), and Central Regional Educational Cooperative (CREC) agencies. These cooperative agreements aid in facilitating transition services for Transition individuals and youth who are eligible for Supported Employment services across the state.

PY2022 Update: On-going activity. Although many of these IGA's, and MOU's are established, annual review of them occurs via meetings with the entities to amend and evaluate as necessary to sustain and expand efforts.

- NMDVR continues to work in collaboration with the Center for Development and Disability toward the implementation and sustainability of Supported Employment programs across the state. Services that are provided at Center for Development and Disability include education, advocacy, and outreach in the field of Supported Employment. Services are available through Project Search and Partners for Employment to participants and their families, community providers, job developers, job coaches, employers, as well as, Local Educational agencies (LEA). VR continues to collaborate with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide information on SSA benefits and Ticket to Work.

PY2022 Update: On-going activity. The collaboration efforts with these entities continues through regular monthly meetings, reporting, and contract monitoring. The annual review of

the contracts allows for comprehensive planning to amend and evaluate as necessary to sustain and expand efforts.

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

NMDVR, in partnership with NM Commission for the Blind, was able to exceed all WIOA performance indicators for PY2022.

PY 2022	Employment Rate 2nd Quarter	Employment Rate 4th Quarter	Median Earnings	Credential Attainment	MSGs
Negotiated	40%	35%	\$4500	26%	32.5%
Actual	41.3%	40.8%	\$5033	37.6%	52.9%

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).

None used

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:

(B) VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided

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.

N/A

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.

NMDVR is taking significant steps to enhance the employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities, particularly focusing on youth. Utilizing Title 1 funds,

NMDVR is committed to providing comprehensive, supported employment services. These services are crucial in assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities in not only securing employment but also ensuring their success and growth in their chosen fields.

NMDVR recognizes the unique challenges faced by youth with significant disabilities. To address this, extended support is offered for up to 24 months, ensuring that youth have ample time and resources to establish themselves in their employment. This period is critical as it allows for adjustment, skill development, and the formation of a stable work routine.

In a bid to offer more inclusive support, NMDVR extends these employment services for youth, with no other forms of support, for up to 48 months or until they reach the age of 25. This extended timeframe is significant as it encompasses a critical transition period from youth to early adulthood, providing continuous support during a phase where they are most vulnerable to employment challenges.

Recognizing that individuals with the most significant disabilities require ongoing support regardless of age, NMDVR also offers services for up to 24 months for those who are 25 years or older. This ensures that age does not become a barrier to receiving necessary employment support.

Historically, NMDVR has spent less than \$200,000 annually on supported employment supports for youth and adults. This amount reflects a focused yet modest investment in this area, highlighting the need for careful allocation and management of resources.

The recent increase in Title 1 funds provides an increase in financial capacity enabling NMDVR to continue to provide these critical services without interruption. The additional funds provide an opportunity for an expansion of services, more comprehensive support programs, and the ability to serve a larger number of individuals.

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 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

NMDVR has implemented a comprehensive strategy to enhance its service provision, especially in response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. This approach focused on several key areas which include, but are not limited to, the following:

NMDVR has placed a Supported Employment Specialist in each of its nine areas across the state. This expansion ensures that specialized support is readily available in different regions, enhancing the reach and effectiveness of services.

In collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) and the New Mexico University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (NM UCEDD), NMDVR is

actively involved in training job developers and coaches. This training includes assistance in obtaining credentials like ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators) and CESP (Certified Employment Support Professional), which are vital for providing high-quality services. This initiative also addresses the shortage of professionals in this field, which became more acute during the pandemic.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians are directly involved in job development and placement activities. This hands-on approach helps in understanding the current job market and developing more effective employment strategies.

NMDVR staff members are receiving training from NM UCEDD and are working towards obtaining ACRE credentialing. This enhances their skills and knowledge, enabling them to provide better support to their participants.

Recognizing the importance of a supportive network, NMDVR is working closely with families and community agencies to identify more job coaches. This is particularly important as the DDS's Mi Via program currently lacks long-term support vendors.

NMDVR is increasing its collaboration with various entities like DD Waiver Case Managers, Medicaid's Community Benefit Program's consultants, and the Aging and Long-Term Services' community benefits consultants. Such collaborations are crucial for a holistic approach to vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

To further expand its capacity, NMDVR is entering into contracts with external vendors for job development and placement services. This step not only extends the range of services offered, but also brings in additional expertise and resources.

A key component of NMDVR's strategy is the inclusion of extended services, particularly for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These extended services are crucial in ensuring sustained employment and success in the workplace. For youth with the most significant disabilities, NMDVR provides tailored extended services that support their transition from school to work. This includes ongoing job coaching, mentorship, and other support services that help these individuals maintain and succeed in their employment roles.

By integrating these extended services into their overall approach, NMDVR not only facilitates immediate job placement but also ensures long-term support and stability for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This holistic approach enhances the agency's ability to meet the diverse needs of its participants and adapt to the changing employment landscape.

Overall, NMDVR's actions reflect a multi-faceted approach to increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. By focusing on training, collaboration, and direct involvement in job placement, NMDVR is enhancing its ability to meet the diverse needs of its participants and adapt to the changing employment landscape.

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 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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Due to the uptick in referrals, the agency anticipates approximately 7,600 individuals will be eligible during the FFY2025 – FFY 2026 period. These estimates are based on historical data utilized pre-COVID to present.

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)
SD	3360	3360	3,276,322.46	0
MSD	3896	3896	4,991,261.78	0
NSD	387	387	82,499.81	0

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

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In FFY 2023, NMDVR served ,487 Supported Employment participants. For FFY 2024, it is expected NMDVR will serve approximately 587 Supported Employment participants. Based on the referrals from the state's waiver program, this number may be slightly higher due to the release of funds that resulted in individuals being removed from an extensive waitlist with the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) waiver program.

This expected growth is not only a reflection of the increased referrals from the state's waiver program but also indicative of NMDVR's ongoing commitment to enhancing vocational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The release of funds, which has helped in significantly reducing the waitlist within the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) waiver program, is a critical factor contributing to this increase.

These funds are being strategically utilized to bolster NMDVR's Supported Employment services. This includes expanding specialized training programs for job coaches, enhancing collaboration with local businesses to create more employment opportunities, and investing in assistive technologies that facilitate workplace inclusion. Furthermore, NMDVR is actively working on broadening its outreach and engagement with underrepresented communities to ensure a more inclusive approach. This holistic strategy not only aims to meet the immediate increase in service demand but also to sustainably support the vocational aspirations of individuals with disabilities in New Mexico. By doing so, NMDVR is reinforcing its commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce, which is essential for the overall economic growth of the state.

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)
Supported Employment FFY2025	220	220	\$1,458,000	0

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. 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.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

N/A

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

N/A

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.

N/A

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

N/A

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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

N/A

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 State 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 OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. 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;

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.

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Counselor (including Transition Counselors)	56	75	96
VR Supervisors	8	8	8
VR Technicians	42	47	55
Program Managers	11	11	11
Administrative Assistants	9	9	5
Field Operation Directors	4	4	7
Business Outreach Coordinators	2	4	7
RSU Assistant Deputy Director	1	2	2

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

72 Caseloads to service 336,557 Individuals with Disabilities in New Mexico (*NIDILRR 2023 Compendium*).

1 Counselor to 4,674 Individuals with Disabilities in NM. However, based on current statistics approximately 2.3% of individuals with disabilities are seeking vocational rehabilitation services with NMDVR. This provides a ratio of 1:107 of VR counselors to clients.

The ratio of counselors to Individuals with Disabilities supports the projected personnel needs of the agency within 5 years identified in C. of this section.

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

Considering the number of individuals currently being served in the VR program and based on a 3% increase per year, it is expected that the NMDVR would expand services to an additional 1,200 individuals over the next 5 years. Based on statistical data provided from RSA, New Mexico is on track to meet the 3% growth in the current program year. This would result in NMDVR serving approximately 8,950 participants in PY2028.

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.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
New Mexico Highlands University	Clinical Mental Health Counseling	129	20
New Mexico Highlands University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	18	5
New Mexico Highlands University	Rehabilitation Counseling	18	14
New Mexico Highlands University	School Counseling	40	22
Western New Mexico University	BAS in Rehabilitation Counseling	25	8
Western New Mexico University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	8	1

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.

NMDVR has implemented many avenues to recruit qualified personnel. In 2022, NMDVR worked closely with the Public Education Department to update the state rule on licensure for Rehabilitation Counselors in the education system in New Mexico. This has allowed NMDVR to expand the pool of qualified individuals to serve as Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Recruitment efforts have included updates to job postings to ensure accuracy in qualifications for employment and expansion of job postings to national platforms such as LinkedIn and Indeed. Additionally, NMDVR has activated its social media platforms and posts open positions on those sites routinely. NMDVR has made internal efforts to better educate current staff on the

open positions within the agency by utilizing SharePoint intranet and monthly employee newsletter for internal recruitment.

In 2022, the NMDVR HR team worked to review pay bands and adjusted those pay ranges to make the agency a more competitive employer. As a result, NMDVR began the process of aligning in-band pay adjustments for all positions. This project has provided the opportunity to increase pay, as appropriate, based on qualifications, education, and experience to ensure appropriate monetary compensation is provided for employees in the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The agency uses the State Personnel automated data system to account for the number of employees, status of individual employees as probationary, permanent, temporary, or term; and related information such as salary, earned leave balance, etc. Vacancies are reported on a routine basis and used to monitor hiring activities. All new hires, promotions, and transfers require the approval of the Director.

The NMDVR HR team is currently working to review all agency positions to ensure pay for employees is in alignment with educational and work experiences. This project has been extensive and provides the agency an opportunity to ensure staff are compensated competitively for the skill sets necessary to work in vocational rehabilitation.

Employees of the agency are covered by the State Personnel Act:

- The agency has committed to hiring and compensating staff at competitive salaries (appropriate placement). The agency is also making strides to offer opportunities for internal advancement based on educational accomplishments. The agency is currently working to complete a classification study to the assigned pay bands for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to ensure the pay band is appropriate based on the unique credentials, education, and knowledge to do the work.
- State of New Mexico employees are offered a competitive employment benefits package, including premium health care coverage, pension (75% of average of top three years' salary), and the option to retire with 25 years of service for staff hired before 2012 and 30 years of service thereafter.
- State Personnel Board rules allow for VR Counselors to be paid a supervisory differential for assuming supervisory responsibilities inclusive of training staff in effective case management and best practices.
- Paid Parental Leave is provided to eligible staff.
- The agency offers training and continuing education opportunities not available with other state agencies.
- The State of New Mexico has implemented an Alternative Work Schedule Policy. This allows staff to request to change from the Normal Work Schedule (NWS) to an Alternative Work Schedule (AWS) with prior written approval of the employee's immediate supervisor and NMDVR Director. The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with more options in work schedules, while adhering to Federal and State statutes and regulations. The added flexibility in creating alternative work schedules also provides new opportunities for efficiency and expanded hours of customer service.

- The State of New Mexico has also implemented a Fitness and Wellness Policy. Employees may request modified work schedules that permit the employee two hours of leave time per week for fitness and wellness activities. The purpose of this policy is to support NMDVR employees in pursuing a healthy lifestyle, potentially leading to improved job performance, increased work satisfaction, and reduced health care and insurance costs. NMDVR recognizes the benefits of employee health and wellness and supports time for fitness and wellness activities. NMDVR also recognizes such activities are mutually beneficial to the agency and its employees because they improve productivity, work performance, and morale while reducing absenteeism, turnover, and health care costs.

Institutes of Higher Ed: NMDVR has created MOUs to support practicums and internships from various programs including NM Highlands University, Western and Eastern New Mexico University. We support staff obtaining additional education through higher education programs by offering flexible schedules for staff participation.

Minority backgrounds: Ethnicity and race are not required reporting stats for State of NM Employees. However by nature New Mexico has a very culturally diverse population. According to Health Resources & Services Administration of the more than 2.1 million residents, 50.1% identify as Hispanic or Lation, 35.9% as White Non-Hispanic or Latino, 11.2% as Native American or Alaskan Native, 2.7% as Black or African American with New Mexico's total population being approximagely 50% female. NMDVR supports diverse hiring practices.

Individuals with disabilities: NMDVR has a dedicated ADA Coordinator in the Human Resources Unit. We have established policies for equal access in our working environments, reasonable accommodation, assistive technology and a dedicated Information Technology team for supports with assistive technology. We comply with all other ADA requirements.

On-boarding and training: NMDVR promotes a thorough on-boarding process to help new employees integrate successfully into their new work environments. Furthermore, the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) provides specific training to the various roles in the field serving participants. This training ensures staff members have the necessary training to work at high performance levels and work effectively with participants of the program. This training includes virtual courses as well as an in-agency Rehabilitation and Support Staff academy.

Recognition and Awards: NMDVR has a Positive Organizational Climate Committee that encourages acknowledgement of employees and highlights achievements. This committee accepts nominations for various awards and acknowledges these awards in the employee newsletter and in the 'Round the Roundhouse newspaper (print and online) for state employees.

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.

In 2022 NMDVR requested a state rule change to the NM Administrative Code (NMAC) for VR Counselors. The update aligned WIOA professional degrees and credentials with New Mexico state licensing for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This process was completed in September 2022 and the amendment to the NMAC is now published.

As a result of the new NMAC, a one-year mentorship plan is required to ensure NMDVR provides a full year of direct work experience encompassing exposure to the many aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Upon completion of the one-year work experience under the mentorship program, the VRC will then be eligible to apply for Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor licensure issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

NMDVR requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have applied for licensure and clear a background check. It should be noted that new counselors have 90 days from their start date to apply for their license. All applications are monitored for compliance. Initial VR Counselor licenses must be renewed after three years. VR Counselors need to apply for renewal at the expiration of state licensure. State licensure is identified in policy as top priority and required for continued employment. Identified documents to be submitted in the credentials package for licensure include:

- Official college transcripts of all degrees received
- Copy of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification, if applicable
- Work history in a rehabilitation field
- Copies of course syllabi related to counseling and guidance, vocational counseling, disability, psychosocial or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, and placement aspects in rehabilitation counseling
- Criminal background information

NMDVR follows the state personnel minimum qualification standards in hiring for the variety of positions in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In addition, NMDVR supports professional development and continuous learning to ensure the staff possess and maintain the necessary skills for 21st century understanding of the workforce and needs of individuals with disabilities.

NMDVR Rehabilitation Services provides extensive training to professionals and paraprofessionals. This includes a comprehensive rehabilitation academy-three full weeks of training upon new hire involving webinars, in-person, and virtual sessions. It encompasses topics from introduction to vocational rehabilitation, history of the VR program, comprehensive

assessments, eligibility, caseload and case management, case management system training, counseling theories, and modalities to job development, placement, assistive technology and writing IPEs.

The agency also coordinates a week of training to include state partners' presentations acclimating the staff on a variety of service collaboration and supports including independent living centers, technology assistance programs, 121 grants, pre-employment transition services, performance indicator training, and core state partners. NMDVR also has all new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Technicians participate in ACRE and CESP training. The agency works with University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability to provide these intensive 12-week trainings to support the systemic strategy to skill-up providers in the state.

NMDVR subscribes to the YESLMS platform, which provides a library of over 60 vocational rehabilitation-dedicated trainings which expands a variety of trainings for all staff to access with immediacy and ease. The training is mandated for Rehabilitation Services staff, and all other agency employees are encouraged to utilize the offered trainings.

Additionally, Program Managers can request targeted training to the Training Team based on performance trends and as needed. The Training Team continually develops curriculum and distribution of content. Annually, the Training Team will submit the RSU Training plan for the year outlining all training requirements for the year.

Assistive Technology collaborative efforts include NMDVR's identified AT liaisons who participate to support the annual statewide Assistive Technology conference. Assistive Technology training for staff is offered throughout the year in coordinating presentations for staff. The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) offers hands-on access to equipment for staff to learn and utilize for gaining knowledge regarding the variety of available equipment for participants. NMTAP participates in NMDVR Rehabilitation Academy, providing a valuable learning experience.

NMDVR has expanded its presence in national community of practice groups, including participation with the Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conferences and with national technical assistance teams. NMDVR has developed several internal teams to address specific content with VR technical assistance programs to expand knowledge areas even further. These work groups participate in monthly meetings, webinars, and conferences. Learned information is shared and disseminated through the agency.

The agency has an internal training request system that allows employees to request various courses offered by external parties. This is an expanded opportunity to continue to increase staff knowledge supported by NMDVR.

NMDVR also supports CRC-related training and certification. Staff holding a CRC are supported to participate in the necessary continuing education requirements to maintain their national certification.

Information regarding training and skills development is disseminated to the rehabilitation services unit via the RSU Training Unit. This Unit of three staff is tasked with maintaining the hub of information to share with staff for the purpose of professional development. The Training Team participates in national community of practice for trainers. Additionally, it receives ongoing communication via listservs from many training providers on VR-specific initiatives to ensure staff are provided opportunities for training in the various aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Many of the trainings are available on demand. NMDVR also has a subscription to YESLMS, which provides a library of VR training topics produced by VR professionals.

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.

In 2022, the New Mexico Vocational Rehabilitation program requested a state rule change to the New Mexico Administrative Code for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The update aligned WIOA professional degrees and credentials with New Mexico state licensing for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This yearlong process was completed in September 2022 and the amendment to the NM Administrative Code is now published.

The NMDVR program requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to apply for and maintain licensure through New Mexico Public Education Department.

The agency will continue to provide training to all staff interested in improving their job skills. The RSU Training Team works with leadership to implement agency initiatives and provide valuable internal training, enhancing knowledge, skills, and abilities in various agency positions

The RSU Training Team will continue to collaborate with internal staff identified as experienced in their respective positions to support the training of new employees in their various areas. RSU leadership will collaborate to identify options for implementation of a mentorship modality to be adopted by the agency, providing an expansion of quality training and hands-on support for new staff. The agency is aware of the need to hire and retain well-qualified staff. NMDVR is proactively working toward the future in terms of career development and succession planning. With the expanded application pool based on WIOA educational standards for VRC positions, there is an obvious increased need for training new staff in specific VR topics.

As a result of the new NMAC, a one-year mentorship plan is required to ensure NMDVR provides a full year of direct work experience encompassing exposure to the many aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Upon completion of the one-year work experience under the mentorship

program, the VRC will then be eligible to apply for Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor licensure issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department. Once Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor Licensure is obtained, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor meets Qualified Personnel standards consistent with Section 01(a)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R 361.18(c) for the purposes of conducting eligibilities, comprehensive assessments, and the development of Individualized Plans for Employment.

NMDVR requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have applied for licensure and clear a background check within 90 days of the start date. All applications are monitored for compliance. Initial VR Counselor licenses must be renewed after three years. VR Counselors need to apply for renewal at the expiration of state licensure. State licensure is identified in policy as top priority and required for continued employment. Identified documents to be submitted in the credentials package for licensure include:

- Official college transcripts of all degrees received
- Copy of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification, if applicable
- Work history in a rehabilitation field
- Copies of course syllabi related to counseling and guidance, vocational counseling, disability, psychosocial or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, and placement aspects in rehabilitation counseling
- Criminal background information

Examples of agency training/professional development not included in the section above also include:

Working with the VRTAC-QM, VRTAC-QE, NTACT-C through intensive technical assistance agreements. Examples of training have included Measurable Skills Gain & Credential Attainment, Data Analysis Training, Fiscal Training, Training on Educational Goals. Future plans include Clinical Supervision Training. NMDVR has also supported staff to attend National Conferences including the NET Summit, NENA, APSE, CSAVR, NRLI, Project SEARCH, Lead VR 2024 National Academy, and CANAR. Staff across all positions are selected to attend these conferences to offer the opportunity to network on a national level and bring back knowledge to build instate capacity.

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.

NMDVR's goals are to ensure that all individuals with disabilities have access to be fully successful in the VR process. This includes assurance that the communication needs are assessed and provided. NMDVR will collect communication details at the time of application to ensure that the VR team is prepared for appointment with participants in their preferred language.

The state has a high need for Spanish speakers and NMDVR employs many staff members who can communicate in Spanish. Additionally, NMDVR employs several American Sign Language (ASL) staff with specialized caseloads to meet the communication needs of individuals who are

Deaf. NMDVR also holds several contracts to provide certified ASL interpretation services to participants and employees. There are a wide range of languages spoken in New Mexico and multiple resources are available to assist the VR team in communications. NMDVR provides a pay differential for staff who are able to communicate in various languages, including Spanish and Sign Language.

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.

The Public Education Department (PED), through its Office of Special Education, administers state services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The NMDVR Transition Director serves as a liaison between the two agencies to ensure communication is consistent and that the programs complement one another to achieve successful outcomes and strengthen relationships and collaboration. Yearly training is conducted between NMDVR and local education agencies regarding IDEA. These efforts are coordinated between the NMDVR Transition Director and the Office of Special Education to provide a mechanism of training to strengthen and inform all interested personnel regarding IDEA, statewide initiatives, and resources. In 2023, NMDVR and PED provided collaborative trainings in an eight-week series promoting understanding of the various aspects of education in New Mexico, from graduation requirements and pathways to the VR program, which covered areas of supported employment and writing and understanding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The training events were extremely educational and a benefit to the state system. This collaboration will continue in upcoming academic years. Furthermore, the NMDVR Transition Director internally hosts several trainings for personnel within the year to provide IDEA training as well as other aspects related to serving students in New Mexico.

NMDVR counseling staff obtains licensure through the Public Education Department, which provides a coordinated mechanism for Vocational Rehabilitation staff to access students in providing Pre-Employment Transition Services. This allows for ease of access in working with school districts, accessing students, and coordinating events and activities for transition services.

NMDVR will participate in the IDEA Advisory Committee to represent vocational rehabilitation as appropriate. An NMDVR Program Manager has been asked to join the IDEA Advisory Committee. An application has been submitted and is pending approval and appointment by the Governors office. NMDVR partners with the IDEA Chair/ Director of the Office of Special Education of New Mexico, to collaborate and provide agency updates. Additionally, there will be vocational rehabilitation representation at the School-to-Work Transition Teams and support for Regional Education Cooperatives in the state.

The NMDVR Transition Director continues to work with PED to identify innovative and engaging ways to further support professional development in New Mexico.

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 Public Education Department (PED), of which NMDVR is a division, is the State Education Agency (SEA) for New Mexico. The MOA with PED serves to facilitate the integration and coordination of services to eligible secondary education students in providing a continuum of services that will meet the needs of all served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The integrated continuum of services is to be flexible enough to meet the needs of all IDEA-eligible students to qualify for NMDVR services within the available resources, maximize opportunity for students, and eliminate limitations and obstacles.

NMDVR and PED leadership meet annually to review the established MOA and address necessary updates, edits, additions, or deletion of content.

NMDVR works closely with PED to assure facilitation of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) of students by utilizing the established agreements, assessing local education agency needs, and through extensive collaboration efforts.

The PED Office of Special Education and Region 9 Education Cooperative (REC 9), based in Ruidoso, are collaborating with NMDVR and other state partners to present a Secondary Transition Training series. The eight sessions are provided monthly through a virtual environment in which NMDVR has provided several presentations to educate special education staff across the state.

In 2022, NMDVR and PED signed an intensive technical assistance agreement with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. This agreement has provided an opportunity for the two state programs to align transition efforts across the state and identify goals and areas of priority with guidance from the technical assistance team. PED and NMDVR are currently in several project developments through this initiative.

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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 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.

Methods of coordination will facilitate the development and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the IDEA, and the development and coordination of Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), as early as possible. This begins during the transition planning process with student, family, school personnel, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor(s), but not later than the time a student with a disability is determined to be eligible or potentially eligible for NMDVR services.

The IPE is addressed within 90 days from the date of eligibility determination for the VR program as required by 34 C.F.R. §§ 361.22(b) and 361.45(e). NMDVR may develop IPEs with projected post-school employment outcomes for students with disabilities (34 C.F.R. § 361.46(a)(1)).

Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b)(1), NMDVR provides consultation and technical assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) to help them plan for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including Pre-ETS and other vocational rehabilitation services. NMDVR also provides consultation and technical assistance to LEAs, charter schools, the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf (collectively referred to as “educational agencies”). Consultation and technical assistance may be provided using alternative means (e.g., video conferences and conference calls).

NMDVR will expand Pre-ETS activities by incorporating authorized activities in the coming years. Authorized activities are those Pre-Employment transition services that may be provided only after a state has determined sufficient funds remain available to provide the required and coordinated activities. Incorporating allowable authorized activities will expand exposure to students with disabilities across the state to valuable community resources and realistic work settings, and increase independent living skills and inclusion in communities, while expanding training and instruction opportunities for vocational rehabilitation staff.

NMDVR provides outreach to these students—which should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process—to include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.

NMDVR will assign at least one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Transition Rehabilitation Counselor to each public high school in the state.

NMDVR will utilize a Pre-Employment Consent Form, signed by student and parent/guardian for potentially eligible students to receive Pre-ETS. This consent form provides verification of a student with a disability confirmed by certified school personnel or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

NMDVR staff will meet annually with LEAs to assess school needs (via a Needs Assessment Form) and establish a Collaboration Agreement Form to identify services to be implemented throughout the school year.

Services may include Pre-ETS to potential or current VR students with disabilities, scheduling orientations, attending and conducting transition fairs, and making referrals to VR.

NMDVR and PED are responsible for their own costs incurred in carrying out the provisions of services to students with disabilities. NMDVR will coordinate with LEAs to ensure services are not duplicated, and that services provided by NMDVR do not supplant existing LEA services.

NMDVR dedicates the following qualified staff who are responsible to ensure the coordination and delivery of Pre-ETS across New Mexico:

- Statewide Transition Director
- Field Operation Director(s)
- Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Transition Unit Specialist

NMDVR ensures that its staff entering the schools have obtained clearances on background checks obtained for Federal Bureau of Investigation records, and otherwise meet requirements detailed in 34 C.F.R. § 361.18(c) or other applicable laws. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors maintain a state issued Public Education Department Rehabilitation Counselor license.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) does not engage in contracts with any programs holding a subminimum wage certificate. The agreement between NMDVR and the Public Education Department (PED) does not include provisions for programs where youth with disabilities are compensated at subminimum wages. Currently, CARC is the only agency in New Mexico that pays subminimum wages. CARC is aware of the legal framework and opts not to employ high school students in such roles. However, NMDVR has established a process for youths aged 16 to 24 who are exiting or graduating from high school and seek employment in sheltered workshops earning subminimum wages. To wit:

1) Transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and/or pre-employment transition services under section 113 of the Rehab Act.

2) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, as follows:

- a) The youth applied for VR services and was found ineligible OR
- b) The youth applied for VR services and was found eligible AND
 - i) had an IPE AND
 - ii) worked toward an IPE employment outcome for a reasonable period without success AND
 - iii) the VR case was closed

3) Career counseling is provided, which includes information and referrals to Federal and State programs and other resources in the employer's geographic area.

- NMDVR transition and rehabilitation counselors meet at the beginning of each school year to complete a collaboration form and needs assessment form. These forms help VR counselors to set up times and days of the week they will be in their assigned school district to conduct pre-employment services, orientation of VR services, coordination of attending IEP's, transition fairs and other school functions as necessary.

Pre-ETS Services-Guidance

- All students with disabilities who are potentially eligible, ages 14-21 have access to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) services from a DVR counselor. VR staff can provide pre-employment transition services on an individual basis or group setting for those potential eligible students.
- DVR counselor's will track and report all transition activities for each student that is receiving Pre-ETS services.
- A DVR consent form will need to be completed by parent & students, prior to starting pre-employment transition services. (iE..group or individual activities, IEP's)

Full VR Service:

If a student has been working with a Transition Counselor/VR counselor on Pre-Employment Transition Services, the counselor will assist in identifying when to refer the student and guide them through the process. School staff, the student, or family/guardians may also refer to VR services.

Referral Guidelines:

- Student has a disability that would impede their ability to work
- Student would benefit from an employment outcome
- Student is ready to begin working with a DVR counselor to set and work toward employment goals, assess needs, and build vocational skills.
- Student has a disability and is at high risk of dropping out
- If student has high needs and wants DVR services, DVR recommends referring as soon as possible.

- Deaf and hard of hearing students should be referred starting at age 14.

NMDVR provides individuals with documentation of services provided should the individual still be interested in working for a sheltered workshop at 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.

NMDVR has a newly expanded unit of Business Outreach specialists who are tasked with the responsibility of engaging with employers. The unit conducts outreach efforts to employers while promoting the services offered through the VR program. This includes coordinated efforts to seek and identify workforce demands. Employers will be surveyed to gather information at both the state and regional level. Ultimately, this information will provide guidance regarding the services the VR program provides employers to meet their needs. The NMDVR Business Outreach Unit focuses on providing training and education to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities. It is the goal of the NMDVR program to become a valuable and reliable resource to employers as this service becomes promoted across New Mexico. NMDVR will coordinate efforts to reach employers closely with the NM Department of Workforce Solutions to ensure services complement each agency and do not duplicate effort.

As an additional support to employers, the goal of the Business Outreach Unit is to develop relationships that will result in employment opportunities for VR participants. These opportunities will be advertised to staff so potential applicants are notified promptly. The Business Outreach Unit will work with counselors to also identify areas of job interest of participants.

Expansion of On-the-Job training opportunities will also be explored through multiple avenues. The Transition Director and the Transition Team work directly with local schools and employers to seek potential employment opportunities for students. This has been successful through the development of direct contracts with the schools to provide an onsite opportunity at the school site with school personnel instructing and training students on multiple job tasks. Throughout the state, Program Managers have coordinated summer-based on-the-job training for students with disabilities. These efforts have resulted in expanded opportunities each summer, with the coordination of multiple entities participating and sharing the responsibility of training students.

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;

Assistive Technology (AT) tools and accessibility to services, when selected and used appropriately, can help individuals with disabilities achieve positive outcomes and be successful at school, at home, in the community, and ultimately, in the workplace. The potential for individuals with disabilities is enormous. AT interventions increase overall development and access to everyday lives, so it is important to combine the intellectual capital of all stakeholders involved to expand understanding and access. A cross-pollination of knowledge between state and local leaders, school administrators, practitioners, parents, state AT experts, and vocational rehabilitation professionals can provide access to current, relevant, and reliable information to make decisions on the selection of appropriate technologies, services, and evidence-based interventions.

The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) is housed in the Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD). NMTAP provides information and access to AT for individuals with disabilities statewide for all ages. Services are available to all levels of education and workforce assistance entities which apply to vocational rehabilitation. Operating under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Administration of Community Living, NMTAP fulfills the requirements of the AT act of 1998 and as amended in 2022.

Services are delivered through the main location in the greater Albuquerque area with two satellite offices located in the northeast and southwest areas of the state. NMTAP has contracts with two educational entities, the Northeastern Regional Educational Cooperative—providing services out of New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas—and Western New Mexico University in Silver City. All services NMTAP provides are available statewide. The satellite offices allow for quick access to AT devices and services in collaboration with the main office. The satellite offices have an increased focus on students in secondary schools who are transitioning from school to work.

Out of the six services mandated by the AT Act, the four core services required are Device Demonstrations, Device Loans, Financial Loans, and Reutilized Equipment. Additional mandated services are for Training and Technical Assistance. All these services are intertwined with the NMDVR commitment to ensure New Mexicans achieve their employment goals and thrive in the community. The standard is to include a hands-on experience of the AT devices. The pandemic allowed for timely access of virtual services while providing knowledge effectively and efficiently across the state.

Two core services, Device Demonstrations and Device Loans, are focused on providing access to AT. Device Demonstration provides an opportunity specifically for individuals with a disability, and their advocates, to compare a variety of AT devices to meet a specific goal/objective. This allows individuals to decide which device best serves their needs. Device demonstrations often result in the second component, a loan of an AT device for a trial period. NMDVR participants and others may borrow the AT device for 42 days. This allows individuals and their VR Counselor to assess if the AT will aid employment or education leading to an employment outcome.

The other two core services are focused on the acquisition of AT. The Financial Loan component of NMTAP provides guaranteed loans to individuals with disabilities statewide when there are

no other financing options or to offset NMDVR funds. The San Juan Center for Independence contracts with NMTAP to provide financial loans for AT, called Access Loans. Access Loans are often used for accessible transportation or modification for entering or exiting one's home, allowing access to education and employment, especially in rural areas. The final core component, Reutilization, provides used durable medical equipment and refurbished computers to people with disabilities. NMTAP contracts with two Adelante Development Center programs for this service: DiverseIT and Back In Use. NMDVR participants can receive a refurbished computer at no cost to be used for their education or employment through the DiverseIT program, while Back In Use offers used medical equipment.

The other mandated services NMTAP provides are Training and Technical Assistance. Training is to increase knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding AT devices or services. Technical Assistance is a collaborative process that allows for entities or agencies to create or increase their accessibility when providing their services internally and/or externally. NMTAP provides training for professionals working with individuals with disabilities through a two-day annual Assistive Technology Conference (ATC) and several smaller one-day workshops throughout the state, called Hands-On Workshops of AT (HOW-AT). NMDVR traditionally sends VR staff to these events. NMTAP also presents at the annual NMDVR Rehab Academy to train VR staff on the basic principles of AT.

NMDVR and NMTAP collaborate to support individuals with disabilities succeeding in the workforce. The two entities are currently working on a written agreement that will define the roles and responsibilities of each in providing knowledge access to, and acquisition of AT to New Mexicans with disabilities. The hope is that the partnership around AT services will be more robust, including an increased alliance with VR staff, access to the latest state-of-the-art equipment available, as well as increasing services to both urban and rural areas of the state. NMTAP staff is expert in AT and VR staff is expert in VR services. Thus, a stronger agreement will fulfill the requirement of Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

NMDVR currently does not have an active partnership regarding programs carried out by the Undersecretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture but will seek to develop such partnerships in future years. NMDVR works closely with the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) under the Governor's Commission on Disability, which offers the New Mexico AgrAbility Program.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

The Social Security Administration (SSA) serves out-of-school youth and refers individuals aged 22 to 26 to NMDVR benefits advisement. Services include assisting SSA beneficiaries in reporting income, applying for work incentives, and developing self-advocacy plans.

In the next 3 years NMDVR will work to develop a relationship with Casa North – Transitional Living for Young Adults (TLYA) a Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) funded program that provides residential and scattered site services for youth ages 16-23. Priority is given to youth that are in CYFD custody and in the Fostering Connections program; involved with juvenile justice and/or tribal social services. Community referrals are accepted but must be cleared for acceptance by CYFD. See description below for additional priority.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

New Mexico has a state use program and NMDVR adheres to the state use act, which requires that purchases are submitted to the state use vendor, Horizons of New Mexico, for first right of refusal. Horizons of New Mexico works on behalf of the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities to manage the contracts for its members outside of the normal bid process, as long as services are quoted at fair market price. Horizons of New Mexico maintains an itemized list of approved services available through members services.

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 Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) actively engages with the Medical Advisory Committee to address and refine policies and procedures, ensuring that any issues are promptly clarified. As part of this effort, NMDVR staff members are dedicated to educating Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are participants in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. This education focuses on teaching self-advocacy skills, particularly in navigating the Medicaid system.

New Mexico's status as a 1634 state facilitates automatic Medicaid coverage under Title XIX for eligible individuals. Each participant receiving Social Security benefits is assigned an NMDVR Benefits Advisor to provide ongoing support throughout their VR program participation. During orientation, participants view the Ticket to Work video and, if eligible, are referred to a Benefits Advisor for an individual appointment. These appointments serve multiple purposes:

- Initiating a comprehensive benefits review.
- Answering questions related to the Ticket to Work program.
- Discussing the impact of employment or training on their benefits.
- Explaining methods for reporting earnings once employed.
- Providing strategies to avoid benefit overpayments.

NMDVR has established a contract with the Center for Development and Disability (CDD). Through the CDD's Partners for Employment (PFE) program, NMDVR disseminates essential resource information and tools on benefits advisement across the state. PFE employs staff members who have obtained certification in SSA benefits advisement through an SSA-approved program. These certified Benefits Advisors conduct a minimum of five Employment Incentive training courses statewide annually. To ensure statewide access to this valuable information, PFE hosts an online on-demand webinar on Social Security benefits, which includes an option for participants to earn a certificate of completion upon passing a skills test. Additionally, PFE develops at least three fact sheets annually, which are reviewed quarterly and maintained on the PFE website.

The collaborative efforts between NMDVR and the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) play a crucial role in providing streamlined services for participants. This partnership involves a data sharing agreement which was executed in 2019.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

NMDVR and DDS have executed an MOU to accomplish joint implementation for supported employment under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 USC 730; 8.314.5 NMAC, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Revised ADA Regulations. The MOU addresses the mechanisms used to address the referral, exchange of information, and confidentiality of personal information used to determine the eligibility of individuals served in common. It will facilitate the coordinated planning of programs between NMDVR and DDS regarding individuals whom both these agencies jointly serve.

Through a contract with CDD, the following trainings are provided:

- Customized Employment Trainings to job developers and job coaches and their agencies, NMDVR staff, high school personnel, and families. This training enables the attendees to obtain CESP or ACRE certifications.
- Annual trainings are offered, including retention and follow-along services, via a contract with Washington Initiative Supported Employment (WISE). CDD staff work to co-present and apply the training to New Mexico's specific needs. The topics are varied and include training on topics such as customized employment, job development, job coaching skills, and community mapping.
- The Reaching New Heights Conference is facilitated by CDD annually. The conference brings together professionals, including school-to-work transition staff, community inclusion providers and vendors, leadership staff, and State of New Mexico partners. Conference sessions are led by local and national experts and include many sessions and tracks that focus on topics such as the transition from school to work, integrated employment services, community inclusion, and leadership development. This training also provides participants an opportunity to earn continuing education credits.
- CDD provides opportunities for 10 NMDVR staff to attend the national Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference or other similar national conferences.
- CDD facilitates statewide quarterly peer networking meetings known as the Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL) groups. These networking meetings include advocacy groups, family organizations, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners, and providers to build increased community employment options.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

The Medicaid program in New Mexico does not allow for Supported Employment services for individuals with mental health diagnoses. NMDVR is a voting member of the Behavioral Health Collaborative, a cabinet-level group representing 15 state agencies and the Governor's Office. The Collaborative is undertaking a transformational process regarding improving behavioral health services to adults, children, youth, and families by focusing on recovery and resiliency.

NMDVR also has a Governor-appointed position on the New Mexico Behavioral Health Planning Council (NMBHPC). The appointee is actively working with the NMBHPC to address this population's employment and long-term support options.

NMDVR is also in preliminary discussions with the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) of the Human Services Department, the Mental Health Resources (MHR) agency, and the five counties served by MHR regarding the likelihood of developing a pilot Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in the Eastern part of New Mexico. The pilot would assess the success of employment and approximate needs from Medicaid for Supported Employment services for this population. NMDVR has been in communication with the IPS Employment Center for support and direction.

NMDVR is developing an MOA with BHSD to provide participants with the support needed to enable them to participate in NMDVR's program more successfully, ultimately increasing the likelihood that the participant will attain economic self-sufficiency.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

NMDVR has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH). This agreement addresses services to individuals who are served by NMDVR and have a communication disorder. This agreement transfers funds from CDHH to NMDVR to support and enhance rehabilitation services for individuals who are Deaf, Deaf Blind, or hard of hearing. NMDVR works to expand services and access through:

1. On-the-job training programs for persons with these disabilities with the state's Independent Living Centers to acquire the skills to work as contracted independent living skills specialists
2. Addressing technology needs, employment outcomes, and post-secondary and vocational training
3. Working collaboratively with state agency job fair organizers to maximize communication accessibility for this population
4. CDHH assisting with locating potential VR Counselors who are fluent in ASL and the cultural and communication needs of this population.

The NMDVR has had an MOU with the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) since 2018. The purpose of the MOU is the joint implementation and coordination for supported employment services. The MOU is a method for the two agencies to address the process, exchange of information, and confidentiality of personal information. Cases are addressed at the regional level to resolve issues and to solve both individual and systemic issues. New Mexico became an Employment First state in 2016 to establish procedures for supporting working-age youth and adults to have access to competitive integrated employment.

NMDVR continues to work with Navajo Nations OSERS, Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and Laguna Acoma Vocational Rehabilitation program. The scope of this MOU is to ensure the relationship between the entities establishes processes to ensure shared resources and collaboration in serving individuals with disabilities who also receive services from a tribal VR program. The MOU defines shared costs, personnel training, services to students with disabilities in providing pre-employment transition services, eligibility procedures, and development of Individualized Plans for Employments to ensure supportive services are not duplicated.

There are several additional projects throughout tribal land to support work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, such as Project HOPE and Project SEARCH.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

NMDVR ensures the appropriate use of community rehabilitation programs to the maximum extent feasible. The agency purchases a broad range of services for clients through local community rehabilitation programs.

These services consist of, but are not limited to:

1. Medical, neuropsychological, and vocational services
2. Testing, fitting, or training in the use of prosthetic and orthotic devices
3. Recreational therapy
4. Physical and occupational therapy
5. Speech, language, and hearing therapy, inclusive of purchase of hearing aids
6. Psychiatric, psychological, and social services, including behavior management services
7. Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs
8. Rehabilitation technology
9. Assistive technology
10. Job development, placement, and retention services
11. Orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind
12. Extended employment
13. Psychosocial rehabilitation services
14. Supported employment services and extended services
15. Services to family members when necessary to the vocational rehabilitation of the individual
16. Personal assistance services
17. Other services similar to those described above.

Most services purchased from community rehabilitation programs are on an individualized basis, addressing the specific barriers to employment because of an individual's disabling condition. Where applicable, community programs must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The agency requires services be purchased in conformance with state laws which regulate professional practices (ex.: psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc.). When appropriate to the individualized needs of a participant of vocational rehabilitation services, community rehabilitation programs are utilized toward an employment outcome. Contractual agreements are frequently utilized with community rehabilitation programs.

A cooperative agreement with a private nonprofit service provider may also be established via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

An MOU may be utilized with community rehabilitation providers as appropriate and does not require an exchange of agency funds but is a legal document describing a bilateral agreement between parties. This document expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action, rather than a legal commitment.

An MOA may be utilized as a written document between parties to cooperatively work together on an agreed-upon project or to meet an agreed-upon objective. The purpose of an MOA is to have a written understanding of the agreement between parties. The MOA can also be a legal document that is binding and holds the parties responsible to their commitment, or it may be a partnership agreement that is not legally binding.

Best Buddies is an international 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement to create opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Best Buddies is an approved supported employment provider with vocational rehabilitation agencies in 17 states, and an approved Medicaid Waiver provider in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Best Buddies is currently accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in California, Illinois, Indiana, New Mexico, and Virginia. Additionally, Best Buddies is an Employment Network through the Social Security Administration and can serve individuals who have a Ticket to Work.

Best Buddies is a long-term service provider to Project SEARCH New Mexico programs. Best Buddies supports students with disabilities and youth through the Pre-Employment Transition contract and direct case services through established VR cases.

Mandy's Farm, a nonprofit organization based in the South Valley of Albuquerque, provides residential, community-based, and employment services to over 200 individuals and families living in Bernalillo County. Mandy's Farm assists individuals with developmental disabilities to achieve their goals for living, learning, and working in the community. Mandy's Farm has been a disability provider through a contract with the state of New Mexico's DDS since 2012, as well as an NMDVR vendor since 2013.

Mandy's Farm has successfully implemented the VAMOS Program each summer since 2018. VAMOS provides transition-age students with disabilities and their families with the support and assistance they need to feel confident in completing their high school studies, pursuing post-secondary education, and/or obtaining employment in the community at minimum wage or higher.

Almost all agreements the agency has with private nonprofit organizations are contracts. NMDVR is currently coordinating with Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) to develop an MOU specific to serving New Mexico youth with disabilities. However, this MOU is not yet in place.

Other private non-profit organizations that NMDVR has worked with include:

- Centers for Independent Living
- NMRECA New Mexico Regional Educational Cooperative Association
- Various Developmental Disability Waiver Providers/Community Rehabilitation Providers (i.e. Mandy's Farm, Best Buddies, Adelante, Tresco, ARCA, LSG & Assoc, Community Options, Active Solutions Inc., Advantage Communications System, Inc., An

Open Door, Lessons of Live, Milagro De Vida, Nezzy Care, Las Cumbres, Meaningful Lives, Ramah Care Services.)

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 VR agency must select the “Edit” button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.

The State Plan must 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.
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 CFR 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:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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).
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.

The State Plan must include
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.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.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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 as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.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:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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 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.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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

The State Plan must include
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.
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 sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.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
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.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:
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.
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.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
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

The State Plan must include
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.
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.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.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 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.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) 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^[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

^[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Certifications (General)

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Name of designated State agency **New Mexico Public Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Casey Stone-Romero**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

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 (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] 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[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], 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;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] 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.

[4] 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 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Designated State agency **New Mexico Public Education Department**

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[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], 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;

[5] 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.

^[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

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);

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

Authorized representative **Casey Stone-Romero**

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

Title of authorized representative **Director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

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

^[1] Public Law 113-128.

^[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

^[3] 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.

^[4] 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 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] 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.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the “Edit” button.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Casey Stone-Romero
Title of Signatory	New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director
Date Signed	2/27/2024

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	43.0%	43.0%	44.0%	44.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.5%	41.5%	41.0%	42.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4808	\$5080	\$4900	\$5120
Credential Attainment Rate	38.1%	39.1%	38.5%	40.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	49.4%	53.4%	50.0%	53.9%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

1. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to ensuring that every New Mexican with a disability achieves their employment goals and thrives in their communities. Our mission is to help individuals with disabilities achieve a suitable employment outcome.
2. Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability who has a substantial impediment to employment may qualify for services available through New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
3. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will ensure that no participant will be denied participation based on gender, race, national origin, socioeconomic status, disability, or age.
4. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation commitment to equitable access through participation on different boards, such as the Workforce Development Boards, Partners for Employment, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the State Rehabilitation Council. We promote access to Workforce Development programs and partners, and other programs and services where the VR program actively advocates on behalf of individuals with disabilities statewide.

**2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER
BENEFICIARIES?**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The State of New Mexico has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, so a significant portion of our population, especially in the rural areas, may face challenges when trying to participate in a rehabilitation program. Economically disadvantaged:

1. May be unable to afford transportation, assistive technology, Internet service, childcare, housing, or other support services that contribute to accessing VR services or participating in a rehabilitation program.

2. Gender:

1. May face gender bias (unintentional or otherwise) or stereotyping.
2. May not be presented with the full range of programs and services available to them because of bias or preconceived ideas about abilities.

3. Race, ethnicity, color, national origin, language, migrant status:

1. May face prejudice, bias, stereotyping, or cultural insensitivity.
2. Maybe unaware of VR services because of a lack of information or outreach in their native language.
3. May need language interpreters for effective communication with VR or other service delivery staff.
4. May need written communication generated by VR or agencies in their native language.

4. Disability:

1. May have a barrier to transportation that is not accessible.
2. May need AT to access programs and services.
3. May need information in alternate formats.
4. May need interpreters for communication.
5. May face physical accessibility issues at some service providers or community businesses.
6. May face discrimination or stereotyping in the community.
7. Lack of access to appropriate educational services including pre-employment transition services

5. Rural status:

1. May face barriers due to lack of transportation
2. May have limited broadband connectivity.
3. May have limited services available in the community due to a lack of providers.

6. Age:

1. May experience bias or stereotyping.
2. May need Assistive Technology or physical restoration services to access programs and services.

7. Homeless status or housing insecurity:

1. May experience barriers faced by low-income individuals.
2. Lack of a stable living environment may affect ability to receive communication.

3. May experience bias or stereotyping.
4. Lack of access to treatment for behavioral health issues.
5. Lack of financial support and income for living.
6. Lack of access to information on available services

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

The following steps may be applicable to multiple barriers:

1. Provide funding and training for transportation to get to offices or appointments. Funding can take many forms such as paying mileage, a bus pass, ride share services, taxis, and payments to friends or family members.
2. Providing Assistive Technology as needed to access programs and services.
3. Creating informational items or marketing materials in different languages and alternate formats.
4. Conduct professional development and training for staff and partners on relevant topics such as:
 - Cultural diversity and awareness
 - Trauma informed care
 - Behavioral health impairments
 - Disability-specific awareness and interventions
5. Increase online presence and ability to apply for services online to minimize the need for travel to offices.

6. Partner with schools, developmental disability agencies, and other federal, state, and local programs serving individuals with disabilities to increase access, awareness, service delivery, and outcomes.
 7. Conduct employer education or training to increase disability awareness and sensitivity, decrease bias, and increase employment opportunities.
 8. Business outreach staff that advocate with employers and increase opportunities.
4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

NMDVR is addressing identified barriers and remains in a cycle of continual improvement. These steps identified above are ongoing. NMDVR's strategic planning and direction in removing barriers continues being labeled and revised and will ultimately guide the timelines and targeted milestones. NMDVR has already addressed some of the barriers noted above with next milestones to take place by next fiscal year 2025 and continue in fiscal year 2026.

New Mexico focuses annually on State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators at the state level and with our local education agency (LEA) partners.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

N/A

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER
BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

N/A

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH
BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR
ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

N/A

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE
IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that

provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

N/A

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE 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.

1. 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

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, 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.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	Peggy Jo Hayes First Full	January / 2023

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
*1/Parent Training and Information Center	Vacant	
*2/Client Assistance Program	Bernadine Chavez Second Full	September / 2021
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	Daphne Mitchell First full	January / 2021
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	Paul Luttrell Second Full	January / 2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	Debra Dominguez Clark First Full	April / 2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	Frank Maestas First Full	May / 2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	Jeffery Blair First Full	February / 2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	Vacant
Disability Advocacy Groups	Mario Hooee Second Full	April / 2024
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	James Babb First Full	January / 2023
*3/Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Paula Seanez Second Full	May / 2024
*4/State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the	Vacant	Vacant

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
State Workforce Development Board	Veronica Alonzo First Full	May / 2024
*5/VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	Greg Trapp Second Full	May / 2024
*6/Representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves	Vacant	Vacant

3. 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.

The SRC has twelve members, seven of whom are blind. Two of the blind members are ex officio, meaning there are five blind voting members and five non-blind voting members. The SRC meets at least quarterly, and more than quarterly during preparation for the State Plan submission. The SRC needs at least one additional blind voting member on the Council. One Business, Industry, and Labor position is currently vacant. The position for a representative of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves is also vacant. The State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) position recently became vacant. The agency is working with the Governor's Office to fill the vacant positions. The Governor's office is very responsive to appointment requests, and it is anticipated that the SRC will be more fully constituted within the next two to three months.

*1/Parent Training and Information Center, Lila Martinez is in the midst of a meaningful break in service, which will be completed at the end of May 2024. The Commission has asked that the Governor appoint Ms. Martinez to a new three year term starting in June of 2024.

*2/Client Assistance Program, Ms. Chavez is not subject to term limits. She was reappointed in September of 2021. The Commission has recommended that Ms. Chavez be reappointed to another three year term starting in September of 2024.

*3/ Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable). Ms. Seanez is not subject to term limits.

*4/ State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Director of

Special Education for the Public Education Department, Dr. Margaret Cage, has submitted her application to the Governor, and it is expected that she will be appointed very shortly.

*5/VR Agency Director (Ex Officio). The DSU director is not subject to term limits.

*6/Representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves, The Commission had identified a candidate who had submitted her application to the Governor, but had to unexpectedly withdraw her application due to assuming a new job.

4. 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 met on July 20, 2023. During that meeting the SRC discussed and approved the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

The Commission and SRC also discussed the ability of the Commission to provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals residing in the state, and the Commission discussed and forecasted the ability of the agency to provide the required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

The SRC met on August 31, 2023. During that meeting the SRC discussed the Council comments on the State Plan and reviewed the comprehensive statewide assessment.

The SRC met on September 23, 2023. During that meeting the Commission and SRC reviewed the results of the public meetings, the SRC approved the Council comments on the State Plan and reviewed the comprehensive statewide assessment. The SRCn also approved the SRC Annual Report for FFY23. The SRC Annual Report highlighted that the Commission is not under an order of selection, and that the Commission is able to provide all of the required Pre-ETS services.

5. 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

a. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by proactively working to recruit, hire, and retain qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, thereby providing for greater continuity and consistency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council expressed concern over the impact of VR Counselor vacancies in the agency, and especially in the field offices. The Council expressed its appreciation for the agency filling all of its VR Counselor positions during PY 2023 and recommended that the agency do all it can to continue fill at least 75 percent of VR Counselor positions.

Agency Response: There is a national shortage of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, and the agency has engaged in maximum efforts to recruit, hire, and retain qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. The agency currently has eight of eight VR Counselor positions filled (100 percent). The agency is committed to recruit and retain employees in a way that is inclusive and culturally sensitive.

b. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to the growing population of older workers, many of whom will be unable or unwilling to retrain for work in a different field from their current occupations, thereby enabling these older workers to become or remain successfully employed.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council recognizes that the workforce is aging, and that the population of older workers will require additional VR services, especially related to the provision of assistive technology needed to retain employment and recommends that the agency work to provide greater support in this area.

Agency Response: The Commission is committed to serve the increasing population of older workers. The aging population has resulted in an aging workforce, and 50 percent of workers report that they plan on working beyond age 65. In addition, 25 percent of workers do not plan on retiring. These older workers will require an increasing amount of VR services to remain or become employed, and especially assistive technology services.

c. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services that support the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle that is conducive to becoming and remaining successfully employed, thereby enabling a greater portion of our consumers to become and remain successfully employed.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council recommends that the agency support a healthy lifestyle due to the recognized association between the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle and successful employment. The Council especially recognizes that there are benefits to mental health and stress reduction that result from the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle.

Agency Response: The Commission recognizes that maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be conducive to obtaining and retaining an employment outcome and will provide services designed to support healthy lifestyles when such services are necessary to obtaining and retaining employment.

d. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing vocational rehabilitation training and counseling that is designed to enhance and improve the soft skills of our consumers, which are becoming an increasing barrier to our consumers becoming and remaining successfully employed.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council is concerned about the lack of appropriate soft skills that are increasingly missing in those persons who are seeking to be employed, and most especially amongst younger workers. The Council is concerned that the acquisition of soft skills is necessary to become and remain employed and recommends that the agency provide more training and support in this area.

Agency Response: The Commission recognizes that having appropriate soft skills is essential to obtaining and retaining employment, and that an increasing portion of consumers are deficient in their soft skills. The Commission will continue to use the Alamogordo Orientation Center and Albuquerque Skills Center to provide instruction in the area of soft skills and will explore additional ways to enhance instruction in soft skills as a part of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

e. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by partnering and working with community colleges and One-Stop centers to more effectively utilize services available through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council believes that this is an appropriate goal considering the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), in particular the requirements to improve cooperation with core partners.

Agency Response: The agency recognizes the benefits of partnering and working with community colleges and One-Stop centers. The agency has been participating in monthly partner meetings that have enhanced the coordination between the Commission and the partners. The Commission will continue to work cooperatively with the partners by designating specific points of contact, by providing appropriate information, and by entering into cooperative agreements where appropriate.

f. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by working cooperatively with the New Mexico Department of Health so as to develop opportunities for competitive and integrated employment for persons who are blind or visually impaired, which will be accomplished by working in partnership with the Medical Assistance

Division, the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and the Behavioral Health Services Division.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council believes that this is an appropriate goal considering the requirements of WIOA, in particular the requirements to improve interagency cooperation. The Council recommends that the agency take specific actions to meet the goal.

Agency Response: The agency has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Department of Health, and the agency will work cooperatively with the Department of Health, with the Medical Assistance Division, with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and with the Behavioral Health Services Division. The agency will also designate specific points of contact for each of these entities.

g. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Orientation Center to provide employment preparation training for adults and transition students, including through the addition of the apartment training facility constructed adjacent to the Center. The apartment facility will increase the capacity of the Orientation Center, will enable the Orientation Center to provide more realistic training, will reduce the need to rent costly and less appropriate private apartments, and will reduce the number of instances in which costly out-of-state training will be necessary to meet the needs of consumers.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council agreed that this is an important goal and recommends that the agency enable students to fully utilize this valuable addition to the training center experience.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to utilizing the apartment in a way that maximizes the training benefit to consumers attending the training center.

h. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by creatively and innovatively using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services to transition students.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council believes in effective training and supports this goal.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to utilizing the Skills Center to provide effective training to vocational rehabilitation consumers as well as potential vocational rehabilitation consumers.

i. Increase the number of consumers served through enhanced Outreach Activities; including media outreach, use of paid advertising, through increased collaboration with ophthalmologists and optometrists, and through the use of the Technology for Children program to conduct outreach to school districts, charter schools, private schools, Bureau of Indian Education operated and funded schools, and students who are home schooled.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council agreed that outreach is an important activity and recommends that this goal should be continued.

Agency Response: The agency will continue to work to increase and enhance outreach to the identified groups using the recommended methods.

j. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes of transition consumers by providing enhanced Pre-Employment Transition Services, including assistive technology where appropriate as a part of an Individualized Plan for Employment, by providing assistive technology through the Technology for Children Program, by conducting increased outreach activities, by conducting educational activities to meet the specific needs of transition students, by increasing proficient use of Braille and Braille math, by increasing proficient use of Orientation & Mobility skills, and by providing services designed to mitigate any deficiencies in these areas that may be related to the pandemic.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council agreed that this goal is imperative in light of the long-term effects of the pandemic and WIOA requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of the VR award on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students who are blind or visually impaired. The Council recommends that the agency take specific actions to meet the goal.

Agency Response: The agency will continue to work to increase services to Pre-Employment Transition Students using the identified methods. The agency has entered into a cooperative agreement with the New Mexico Public Education Department to facilitate the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services. The agency seeks to be involved in Individualized Education Plan meetings for students starting at age 14, and the agency operates the Students in Transition to Employment Program. The agency has also entered into a Governmental Services Agreement with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and has also entered into an

Intergovernmental Agreement with the New Mexico Central Region Educational Cooperative to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services. The agency recognizes that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of transition students to receive needed blindness training and will provide services to compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by their inability to receive training or services during the pandemic.

k. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing services in a way that genuinely honors the "informed choice" provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, enabling Commission consumers to have the opportunity to obtain employment at higher levels of compensation, focusing on areas in which employees are in highest demand BASED ON Labor market information.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council agreed that the provision of "informed choice" is fundamental within the public vocational rehabilitation program and recommends that this goal be continued in the coming years.

Agency Response: The agency continues to provide services in a way that enables consumers to set and obtain high employment goals. This often includes supporting consumers in the attainment of advanced degrees. For the program year ending June 30, 2023, the average hourly wage for agency consumers successfully closed during that year was \$22.90.

l. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing a quality and expanding Newsline system that gives consumers access to employment listings, business news, and other important information, including through both local Newsline and through NFB-Newsline.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council agreed that Newsline is critical to the ability of blind and visually impaired New Mexicans to access information, news, breaking news, Spanish-language news, Native-American news, and job listings, and recommends that the agency continue to make Newsline a priority.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to providing a quality Newsline service, including both local Newsline and NFB-Newsline. The agency will continue to sponsor NFB-Newsline in New Mexico, which provides access to over 500 national publications. The agency will also continue to support local Newsline, which provides access to newspaper information that is not available on NFB-Newsline. The local Newsline has also added the Gallup Independent and the Navajo Times.

m. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services to transition students, including those who attend home, Charter schools, private schools, and Bureau of Indian Education operated and funded schools.

Council Input and Recommendations: Based on WIOA requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of VR funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services on students aged 14 to 21, the Council recommends that this remains an important goal for the agency.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to using the Skills Center to meet the statewide needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers, and especially consumers receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services.

n. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services that are designed to remediate or mitigate any deficiencies in skills that may be related to the pandemic, and to take advantage of new opportunities for remote work.

Council Input and Recommendations: Based on the impact of the pandemic and requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of VR funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services on students aged 14 to 21, the Council recommends that this remains an important goal for the agency.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to using the Skills Center to provide training to compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by the inability of consumers to receive training or services during the pandemic, and to prepare consumers for new remote-work opportunities by providing enhanced technology training.

o. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the provision of increased remote employment opportunities, including opportunities in rural portions of the state.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council recommends that this goal should be a priority in the coming year as the pandemic has created new remote-work opportunities.

Agency Response: The agency recognizes that new remote-work opportunities have been created by the pandemic and is committed to enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes related to remote-work opportunities, including opportunities in rural portions of the state.

p. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers who are Deaf-Blind through collaboration and partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services (VIIS), and with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, including through the delivery of assistive technology to consumers who are Deaf-Blind.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council recommends that this goal should be continued.

Agency Response: The pandemic has forged a stronger partnership between the agency and the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The agency has assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor to take the lead on services related to consumers who are Deaf-Blind. The agency also works with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to coordinate provision of services to persons who are Deaf-Blind. The agency works with a variety of other partners, including Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services, the Helen Keller National Center, and the Deaf-Blind Task Force.

q. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) by shortening the time required for vendors to complete the required training, including by using the Business Enterprise Licensee Training Program offered by the National Association of Blind Merchants at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council is in full support of the agency's Business Enterprise Program and recommends that this continues as an important agency goal.

Agency Response: The agency has adopted the Business Enterprise Licensee Training Program offered by the National Association of Blind Merchants at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind as the training provider for vendors and is working with New Mexico programs to create a local provider so that food preparation and cooking methods can be taught locally. The agency recognizes that the pandemic has had a negative impact on the Business Enterprise Program and will work to restore and expand the vending program.

r. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by enhancing overall performance and productivity by engaging in activities designed to mitigate the impacts of blindness and visual impairment, by engaging in outreach and other activities designed to identify additional potential consumers, and by making the public and medical community more aware of Commission services.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council fully supports this goal.

Agency Response: The agency is committed to delivering services in the most efficient and effective way possible.

s. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers by providing enhanced benefits counseling and guidance to reduce concerns related to the loss or reduction of benefits.

Council Input and Recommendations: The Council fully supports this goal and recommends that the Commission continue to build capacity in this important area.

Agency Response: The agency believes it is critical for a consumer to establish a solid financial foundation before they can fully focus on participating in their vocational rehabilitation program.

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;

Pursuant to 34 CFR Section 361.29, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind (NMCB) and the NMCB State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) jointly developed and approved the methodology for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment at a meeting held on July 20, 2023. The CSNA included a survey of demographic, labor, youth, and medical data; the conducting of public meetings on September 19, 23, and 25; the review of three public meetings conducted on March 9, 2023; focused discussions; and consideration of the long-term impact of the pandemic. The review of demographic data began during the July 20 SRC meeting. The CSNA was reviewed at special meetings of the SRC held on August 31, 2023, and again on September 25, 2023. During the July 20 SRC meeting, the NMCB reviewed financial and staffing resources with the SRC, and

determined it had the ability to provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals residing in the state, including those with the most significant disabilities and those who need supported employment. During the August 31 SRC meeting, NMCB announced it will decline to request Supported Employment funds due to the administrative burden, which is disproportionate to the benefit, and the SRC agreed with the decision. During the July 20 SRC meeting, the NMCB forecasted it had the ability to provide all of the required Pre-ETS services to all eligible students residing in the state. NMCB has 100% of its VR counselor positions filled, and 100% of its assistive technology specialist positions filled. The SRC used the CSNA to inform the development and final approval of the goals and priorities, which took place at the August 31 and September 25 SRC meetings. The identified needs include serving an older workforce, meeting the needs of consumers who need support to lead healthy lifestyles, provide supports to improve soft skills, provide support in the area of assistive technology, provide support in the area of Braille, provide support in the area of orientation and mobility, and provide support to remediate or mitigate the long-term impact of the pandemic.

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness amongst persons of working age, and increasing rates of diabetes will result in increasing numbers of persons with diabetic retinopathy. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System from 2021, showed that 26% of those with diabetes had diabetes-related eye disease and almost one in five had diabetic retinopathy. One in 4 Americans aged 40 and older have eye disease due to diabetes, more than double the levels from 2004. For persons 24 and under, more than 1 in 10 persons with diabetes had diabetic retinopathy. For those 25 to 39, nearly 1 in 5 had diabetic retinopathy. A report in meta-analysis published online March 17 in JAMA Network Open, showed that the rate of diabetic retinopathy is 6.99 percent in patients with pediatric type 2 diabetes, and increases with the length of time that the individual has diabetes. A study published February 14 in the journal JAMA Network Open, found that COVID-19 infection increases the likelihood of diabetes.

Approximately 20 percent of persons 65 and older are currently working. According to an Associated Press poll, 23 percent of persons say that they will never retire, and approximately 25 percent say that they expect to work beyond the age of 65. There is a strong correlation between age and blindness, and NMCB can expect that many of these older workers will need vocational rehabilitation services.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

A study published online in JAMA Ophthalmology linked Poor social determinants of health to vision loss. Economic stability, educational attainment, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment were all shown to be significant predictors of poor vision. Conversely, higher income was associated with lower odds of vision loss.

New Mexico ranked 50th in the annual Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count report for 2023 and has ranked 49th or 50th since 2012. One positive was that the share of children living in high-poverty areas decreased from 22% to 19%. The percent of children in single-parent families was 44%, unchanged between 2019 and 2021.

A study published online in Pediatrics showed that the childhood obesity rate in the U.S. had increased from 12 years ago, and childhood obesity was worse for children from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged households.

As a result, more children are likely to suffer vision loss along with other health effects caused by poverty and the relative lack of good healthcare, especially in rural areas of New Mexico. These children will be seeking vocational rehabilitation services.

Persons from minority backgrounds also have higher rates of diabetes and glaucoma. The lifetime risk of diabetes for all Americans has doubled in the last 20 years, with males born in 2000 having a 32.8 percent lifetime chance of developing diabetes, and females born in 2000 having a 38.5 percent lifetime chance of developing diabetes. For Hispanics born in 2000, the lifetime risk of diabetes for males is 45.4 percent, and 52.5 percent for females.

According to the 2020 census, 47.7% of New Mexicans are Hispanic and 8.9% are Native American. Tying back to the studies mentioned in the preceeding paragraph, the Commission can expect an increase in consumers from these populations seeking vocational rehabilitation services in future years.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

NMCB consumers are frequently served by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). The TANF program offers financial assistance for families who have incurred the loss of employment as a result of the onset of a disability such as blindness or visual impairment. TANF can provide an essential financial safety net as the consumer is receiving vocational rehabilitation services and transitioning to programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, SSDI, and SSI. The receipt of TANF and other disability benefits forms a foundation from which NMCB consumers are able to prepare for and gain employment, ultimately transitioning off of benefits. NMCB also works with the Adult Education Division of the Higher Education Department for consumers who need a GED, who need English language skills, or who need other adult literacy skills. .

Because the NMCB is not under an order of selection, NMCB does not need to refer individuals who would otherwise be on an order of selection to the Workforce System. The CSNA also considered the full range of vocational rehabilitation services provided by NMCB and the specialized needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and determined that persons who were blind or visually impaired were most appropriately served by NMCB.

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.

During the July 20 SRC meeting, the NMCB forecasted it had the ability to provide all of the required Pre-ETS services to all eligible students residing in the state. The NMCB reviewed the CSNA during the July 20, August 31, and September 25 SRC meetings. The results included that NMCB will need to provide additional services to compensate for youth and transition students who did not receive adequate instruction in Braille or orientation and mobility during the

pandemic. Additional identified needs include assistive technology, soft skills, and healthy living support.

It was also noted that increasing rates of diabetes and obesity in youth will result in increases of diabetic retinopathy in youth and transition students. A study published online in Pediatrics showed that the childhood obesity rate in the U.S. had increased from 12 years ago, and childhood obesity was worse for children from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged households. According to a 2019 study from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 16.9 percent of New Mexico children between the ages of 10 and 17 are considered obese, ranking New Mexico as the 11th worst state in the nation for childhood obesity. A report in meta-analysis published online in JAMA Network Open, showed that the rate of diabetic retinopathy is 6.99 percent in patients with pediatric type 2 diabetes, and increases with the length of time that the individual has diabetes. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System from 2021, showed that more than 1 in 10 persons with diabetes who were 24 and under had diabetic retinopathy. The Journal of the American Medical association reported that the number of children with Type 2 diabetes increased by more than 50 percent between 2001 and 2017, with the prevalence of Type 1 diabetes increasing by nearly 60 percent during the same period. These consumers will also have other complications related to diabetes that will need to be addressed through the NMCB VR program.

New Mexico ranked 50th in the annual Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count report for 2023 and has ranked 49th or 50th since 2012. Positives include that the state had expanded the childcare assistance program in 2021, that funding for early childhood education was increased in 2022, and that the share of children living in high-poverty areas fell from 22% to 19%. Negatives include the percent of Fourth graders not proficient at reading falling from 76% to 79%, and the percent of eighth graders not proficient in math falling from 79% to 87%. The percent of children in single-parent families was 44%, remaining the same between 2019 and 2021.

A study published in Pediatrics found that 36.5% of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder had completed vision screening, compared to 59.5% rate for children without autism.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

NMCB has completed the construction of a four-plex set of apartments at the Orientation Center in Alamogordo, meaning NMCB achieved a long-standing need and goal. The apartments will enable the agency to serve more consumers at the Orientation Center, and to more efficiently serve persons with specific family and mobility needs.

As a part of the CSNA approved on July 20, 2023, NMCB gathered input on the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State during a duly noticed regular meeting of the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities (Council) Held at the NMCB on August 9, 2023. The Council administers the New Mexico State Use Act, and the NMCB Director serves as the Council's Secretary. The agenda item was titled, "Discussion of the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs within the State of New Mexico." The Council includes two representatives of CRPs, and the agenda was sent to CRPs throughout the state. The meeting was attended by the SRC Chair, the

CRP representative to the SRC, and the SRC Liaison. The Council discussion determined no need to establish new CRPs, but to develop and improve services performed by CRPs through continued expansion of suitable services provided by CRPs through the State Use Act, including inclusion of temporary services as a potential suitable service. The results of the discussions were reported to the SRC on August 31, 2023.

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

The following goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the Commission for the Blind and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The goals and priorities were informed by public meetings held on March 9, September 19, September 23, and September 25, 2023. The goals and priorities were also based on the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment approved by the SRC on July 20, 2023, and reviewed by the SRC on August 31 and September 25, 2023. The goals and priorities were reviewed and discussed at meetings of the SRC held on April 6, July 20, August 31, and September 25, 2023.

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;
- B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;
- 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, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

a. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by proactively working to recruit, hire, and retain qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, thereby providing for greater continuity and consistency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

Basis: The Council expressed concern over the impact of VR Counselor vacancies in the agency, and especially in the field offices. Concern over VR Counselor vacancies was an issue identified in the prior Consumer Satisfaction survey. The Council expressed its appreciation for the agency filling all of its VR Counselor positions during PY 2023 and recommended that the agency maintain a goal of keeping at least 75% of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions filled.

Performance Measure: The agency has consistently exceeded the readily quantifiable goal of maintaining at least 75 percent of VR Counselor positions occupied by filling 100 percent of VR Counselor positions starting in FFY23 and continuing in FFY24.

Strategies:

1. There is a national shortage of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, and the agency has engaged in maximum efforts to recruit, hire, and retain qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors on a nationwide basis.
2. The agency is committed to recruit and retain employees in a way that is inclusive and culturally sensitive.
3. The agency will Recruit at in state and out-of-state personnel preparation programs.
4. The agency will Recruit through blind consumer organizations, including both the American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind.
5. The agency will provide funding for recruits who have only a bachelor's degree to attend a master's degree program in either Rehabilitation Counseling or Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling.
6. The agency will Pay for college costs necessary for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to become eligible for New Mexico State Licensure and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

b. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to the growing population of older workers, many of whom will be unable or unwilling to retrain for work in a different field from their current occupations, thereby enabling these older workers to become or remain successfully employed.

Basis: The Council recognizes that the workforce is aging, and that the population of older workers will require additional VR services, especially related to the provision of assistive

technology needed to retain employment and recommends that the agency work to provide greater support in this area.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal based on current data and the confounding variable of the pandemic. The agency will track the successful closure rate of workers who are 55 and older so as to establish a baseline in the PY25 State Plan for The PY29 State Plan.

Strategies:

1. The Commission is committed to serving the increasing population of older workers. The aging population has resulted in an aging workforce, and 50 percent of workers report that they plan on working beyond age 65. In addition, 25 percent of workers do not plan on retiring. These older workers will require an increasing amount of VR services to remain or become employed, and especially assistive technology services.

2. The agency will Deliver skills training through home-based and residential-center-based services.

3. The agency will Deliver assistive technology services through in-person and remote training methods, using both Commission staff and contract trainers.

4. The agency will provide job placement services to help older workers become employed.

- c. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services that support the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle that is conducive to becoming and remaining successfully employed, thereby enabling a greater portion of our consumers to become and remain successfully employed.

Basis: The Council recommends that the agency support a healthy lifestyle due to the recognized association between the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle and successful employment. The Council especially recognizes that there are benefits to mental health and stress reduction that result from the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal based on the inability to collect quantifiable data, fluctuating health conditions, and also the confounding variable of the pandemic.

Strategies:

1. The Commission recognizes that maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be conducive to obtaining and retaining an employment outcome and will provide services designed to support healthy lifestyles when such services are necessary to obtaining and retaining employment.

2. The agency will provide counseling services as necessary.

3. The agency will provide Diet and nutrition services as necessary.

4. The agency will provide strength-building, endurance, and stability training classes as necessary

5. The agency will maintain the strength and cardio equipment in the Alamogordo Orientation Center gym in excellent working condition and encourage center students to utilize the equipment on a regular basis.

d. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing vocational rehabilitation training and counseling that is designed to enhance and improve the soft skills of consumers, which are becoming an increasing barrier to consumers becoming and remaining successfully employed.

Basis: The Council is concerned about the lack of appropriate soft skills that are increasingly missing in those persons who are seeking to be employed, and most especially amongst younger workers. The Council is concerned that the acquisition of soft skills is necessary to become and remain employed and recommends that the agency provide more training and support in this area.

Performance Measure: The agency will provide soft skill training and support to 90 percent of students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services at the Skills Center, to 100 percent of students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services at the Orientation Center, and to 100 percent of adult consumers receiving services at the Orientation Center.

Strategies:

1. The Commission recognizes that having appropriate soft skills is essential to obtaining and retaining employment, and that an increasing portion of consumers are deficient in their soft skills.

2. The Commission will continue to use the Alamogordo Orientation Center and Albuquerque Skills Center to provide instruction in the area of soft skills and will explore additional ways to enhance instruction in soft skills as a part of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

e. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by partnering and working with community colleges and One-Stop centers to more effectively utilize services available through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs.

Basis: The Council believes that this is an appropriate goal considering the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), in particular the requirements to improve cooperation with core partners.

Performance Measure: The agency will consistently maintain community college representation on the SRC, will consistently maintain agency representation on the state workforce development board, and will consistently maintain representation on at least 75 percent of the local workforce development boards.

Strategies:

1. The agency recognizes the benefits of partnering and working with community colleges and One-Stop centers.

2. The agency has been participating in monthly partner meetings that have enhanced the coordination between the Commission and the partners. The Commission will continue to work

cooperatively with the partners by designating specific points of contact, by providing appropriate information, and by entering into cooperative agreements where appropriate.

f. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by working cooperatively with the New Mexico Department of Health so as to develop opportunities for competitive and integrated employment for persons who are blind or visually impaired, which will be accomplished by working in partnership with the Medical Assistance Division, the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and the Behavioral Health Services Division.

Basis: Considering the requirements of WIOA, in particular the requirements to improve interagency cooperation. The Council recommends that the agency take specific actions to meet the goal.

Performance Measure: The agency will maintain and develop written cooperative agreements and enhanced working relationships with the Medical Assistance Division, the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and the Behavioral Health Services Division.

Strategies:

1. The agency has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Department of Health, and the agency will work cooperatively with the Department of Health, with the Medical Assistance Division, with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and with the Behavioral Health Services Division. The agency will also designate specific points of contact for each of these entities.

g. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Orientation Center to provide employment preparation training for adults and transition students, including through the addition of the apartment training facility constructed adjacent to the Center. The apartment facility will increase the capacity of the Orientation Center, will enable the Orientation Center to provide more realistic training, will reduce the need to rent costly and less appropriate private apartments, and will reduce the number of instances in which costly out-of-state training will be necessary to meet the needs of consumers.

Basis: The Council agreed that this is an important goal and recommends that the agency enable students to fully utilize this valuable addition to the training center experience.

Performance Measure: The agency will maintain at least a 60 percent average occupancy rate of the apartments during each of the months of the adult training program at the Orientation Center.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to utilizing the apartment complex in a way that maximizes the training benefit to consumers attending the training center.
2. The agency will Use the apartments to expand the number of students that can receive intensive blindness skills training at the Alamogordo training center.
3. The agency will Use the apartments to make it possible for students to utilize the skills they are learning in an apartment rather than a dormitory setting.

4. The agency will use the apartments to prepare students for post-secondary education and employment.

h. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by creatively and innovatively using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services to transition students.

Basis: The Council believes in effective training and recommends pursuit of this goal.

Performance Measure: The Skills Center will serve at least fifteen Pre-ETS students each program year, and at least ten adults each program year.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to utilizing the Skills Center to provide effective training to vocational rehabilitation consumers as well as potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including transition students.

2. The agency will use the Skills Center to deliver both in-person and remote training.

3. The agency will use the Skills Center to reach adults in all parts of New Mexico, including those who have been unserved and underserved, as well as adults in rural areas, through remote training opportunities.

4. The agency will use the Skills Center to reach students with disabilities in all parts of New Mexico, including those who have been unserved and underserved, as well as students in rural areas, through remote training opportunities.

5. The agency will use the Skills Center to provide blindness skills training during the annual Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP), which combines a summer work-based learning experience with blindness skills training for students with disabilities.

i. Increase the number of consumers served through enhanced Outreach Activities; including media outreach, use of paid advertising, through increased collaboration with ophthalmologists and optometrists, and through the use of the Technology for Children program to conduct outreach to school districts, charter schools, private schools, Bureau of Indian Education operated and funded schools, and students who are home schooled.

Basis: The Council believes that outreach is an important activity and recommends that this goal should be continued and enhanced.

Performance Measure: The agency will annually mail an outreach packet to all ophthalmologists and optometrists in the state consisting of an informational letter from the agency director, the SRC annual report, and signature guides bearing agency contact information. The agency will present to at least one statewide transition conference each program year, and present annually to at least one statewide meeting of a blindness consumer organization.

Strategies:

1. The agency will continue to work to increase and enhance outreach to the identified groups using the recommended methods.

2. The agency will outreach to unserved and underserved individuals, including those in rural parts of the state.
 3. The agency will outreach to students with disabilities and potential students with disabilities.
 4. The agency will outreach to individuals in Native American communities.
 5. The agency will outreach to special education directors across the state in order to identify vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers.
 6. The agency will outreach using the Technology for Children program.
- j. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes of transition consumers by providing enhanced Pre-Employment Transition Services, including assistive technology where appropriate as a part of an Individualized Plan for Employment, by providing assistive technology through the Technology for Children Program, by conducting increased outreach activities, by conducting educational activities to meet the specific needs of transition students, by increasing proficient use of Braille and Braille math, by increasing proficient use of Orientation & Mobility skills, and by providing services designed to mitigate any deficiencies in these areas that may be related to the pandemic.

Basis: The Council believes that this goal is imperative in light of the long-term effects of the pandemic and WIOA requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of the VR award on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students who are blind or visually impaired. The Council recommends that the agency take specific actions to meet the goal.

Performance Measure: The agency shall annually provide the required and authorized Pre-ETS services to at least 40 Pre-ETS students.

Strategies:

1. The agency will continue to work to increase services to Pre-Employment Transition Students using the identified methods.
2. The agency has entered into a cooperative agreement with the New Mexico Public Education Department to facilitate the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services. The agency seeks to be involved in Individualized Education Plan meetings for students starting at age 14.
3. The agency operates the Students in Transition to Employment Program, which combines work-based learning experiences with Pre-Employment Transition Services during secondary and post-secondary summer breaks.
4. The agency has also entered into a Governmental Services Agreement with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services.
5. The agency has also entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the New Mexico Central Region Educational Cooperative to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services.
6. The agency recognizes that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of transition students to receive needed blindness training and will provide services to

compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by their inability to receive training or services during the pandemic.

7. The agency will continue to support the use of Braille throughout New Mexico by sponsoring workshops and examinations that lead to National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB).

k. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing services in a way that genuinely honors the "informed choice" provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, enabling Commission consumers to have the opportunity to obtain employment at higher levels of compensation, focusing on areas in which employees are in highest demand BASED ON Labor market information.

Basis: The Council believes that the provision of "informed choice" is fundamental within the public vocational rehabilitation program and recommends that this goal be continued in the coming years.

Performance Measure: The agency will consistently meet state performance measures for second and fourth quarter retention rates after exit, median earnings second quarter after exit, credential attainment, and measurable skills gain.

Strategies:

1. The agency continues to provide services in a way that enables consumers to set and obtain high employment goals.

2. The agency will support consumers to pursue careers that may require post-secondary education, including advanced degrees, within or outside New Mexico, including study abroad; as well as employment outcomes that provide the best opportunity for high wages and career advancement.

3. The agency will support and encourage self-employment.

l. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing a quality and expanding Newsline system that gives consumers access to employment listings, business news, and other important information, including through both local Newsline and through NFB-Newsline.

Basis: The Council believes that Newsline is critical to the ability of blind and visually impaired New Mexicans to access information, news, breaking news, Spanish-language news, Native-American news, and job listings, and recommends that the agency continue to make Newsline a priority.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal based on the current software design of the Newsline systems and the difficulty of correlating employment outcomes with actual Newsline usage.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to providing a quality Newsline service, including both New Mexico Newsline and National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Newsline.

2. The agency will continue to sponsor NFB-Newsline in New Mexico, which provides access to over 500 national publications, including by deaf-blind individuals.

3. The agency will also continue to support New Mexico Newsline, which provides access to newspaper information that is not available on NFB-Newsline.

m. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services to transition students, including those who attend home, Charter schools, private schools, and Bureau of Indian Education operated and funded schools.

Basis: Based on WIOA requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of VR funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services on students aged 14 to 21, the Council recommends that this remains an important goal for the agency.

Performance Measure: The Skills Center will serve at least fifteen Pre-ETS students each program year, will serve at least ten adult VR consumers each program year, and will host at least twenty meetings in which VR or potential VR consumers may be present to learn about agency services.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to using the Skills Center to meet the statewide needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers, and especially consumers receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services.

2. The agency will use the Skills Center to deliver both in-person and remote training to adults and students with disabilities across the state.

3. The agency will use the Skills Center to deliver both required and authorized Pre-Employment Transition Services.

4. The agency will use the Skills Center to deliver the Albuquerque-based facet of the Students in Transition to Employment Program to students with disabilities.

n. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of services that are designed to remediate or mitigate any deficiencies in skills that may be related to the pandemic, and to take advantage of new opportunities for remote work.

Basis: Based on the impact of the pandemic and requirements to reserve and spend at least 15 percent of VR funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services on students aged 14 to 21, the Council recommends that this remains an important goal for the agency.

The Skills Center will serve at least fifteen Pre-ETS students each program year, will serve at least ten adult VR consumers each program year, and will host at least twenty meetings in which VR or potential VR consumers may be present to learn about agency services. The use of the Skills Center to remediate or mitigate any deficiencies in skills that may be related to the pandemic is not a readily measurable goal based on current data and the confounding variable of the pandemic.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to using the Skills Center to provide training to compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by the inability of consumers to receive training or services during the pandemic.
 2. The agency will use the Skills Center to deliver the Students in Transition to Employment Program to students with disabilities living in the Albuquerque metropolitan area.
 3. The agency will deliver Pre-Employment Transition services to students across New Mexico both in-person and remotely.
- o. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the provision of increased remote employment opportunities, including opportunities in rural portions of the state.

Basis: The Council recommends that this goal should be a priority in the coming years as the pandemic has created new remote-work opportunities.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal based on current data and the confounding variable of the pandemic. The agency will track employment outcomes that incorporate remote work so as to establish a baseline in the PY25 State Plan to establish performance measures for The PY29 State Plan.

Strategies:

1. The agency recognizes that new remote-work opportunities have been created by the pandemic.
 2. The agency will provide training and support to enable consumers to take advantage of remote work opportunities.
 3. The agency will work closely with employers to ensure that their online systems will work effectively with assistive technology used by blind and visually impaired individuals.
- p. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers who are Deaf-Blind through collaboration and partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services (VIIS), and with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, including through the delivery of assistive technology to consumers who are Deaf-Blind.

Basis: The Council recommends that this goal should be continued.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal due to the very small sample size, which subjects the results to unpredictable volatility.

Strategies:

1. The pandemic has forged a stronger partnership between the agency and the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
2. The agency has assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor to take the lead on services related to consumers who are Deaf-Blind.

3. The agency will continue working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to coordinate the provision of services to persons who are Deaf-Blind, including by opening joint cases.

4. The agency will work with a variety of other partners, including Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services, the Helen Keller National Center, and the Deaf-Blind Task Force to improve services to individuals who are deaf-blind.

q. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) by shortening the time required for vendors to complete the required training, including by using the Business Enterprise Licensee Training Program offered by the National Association of Blind Merchants at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind.

Basis: The Council is in full support of the agency's Business Enterprise Program and recommends that this continues as an important goal for the agency to pursue.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal due to the very small sample size, which subjects the results to unpredictable volatility.

Strategies:

1. The agency has adopted the Business Enterprise Licensee Training Program offered by the National Association of Blind Merchants at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind as the training provider for vendors.

2. The agency will work with New Mexico programs to create a local provider so that food preparation and cooking methods can be taught locally.

3. The agency will work to expand the vending program by making presentations to new agency Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to make them aware of the benefits of the program.

4. The agency will work to expand the vending program by making presentations to blind consumer groups in order to recruit potential blind business owners to participate in the program.

r. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by enhancing overall performance and productivity by engaging in activities designed to mitigate the impacts of blindness and visual impairment, by engaging in outreach and other activities designed to identify additional potential consumers, and by making the public and medical community more aware of Commission services.

Basis: The Council recommends pursuit of this goal.

Performance Measure: This is not a readily measurable goal based on the very expansive language of the goal and the corresponding inability to collect quantifiable data.

Strategies:

1. The agency is committed to delivering services in the most efficient and effective way possible.

2. The agency will conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of Commission services.

3. The agency will outreach to the ophthalmology and optometry community to make them more aware of Commission services.

4. The agency will attend conferences of the National Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) in order to learn about national trends as well as best practices used in other states that can lead to improvement in Commission services and increased opportunities for high quality employment outcomes for Commission consumers.

s. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers by providing enhanced benefits counseling and guidance to reduce concerns related to the loss or reduction of benefits.

Basis: The Council fully supports this goal and recommends that the Commission continue to build capacity in this important area.

Performance Measure: The agency will update and revise its benefits desk reference by the end of the second quarter of PY25 and will provide at least one benefits training provided by a certified benefits counselor to program managers and VR counselors during PY25.

Strategies:

1. The agency believes it is critical for a consumer to establish a solid financial foundation before they can fully focus on participating in their vocational rehabilitation program.

2. The agency will provide training for all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on Social Security benefits.

3. The agency will continue its contract with New Mexico Legal Aid to provide representation in filing requests for reconsideration or appeals for consumers who have been denied eligibility for Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits.

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;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

What follows are the approved Goals and Priorities that were developed and approved at the Council's special meeting on December 16, 2019, and modified at the Council's virtual meeting on September 14, 2021, as well as progress in meeting each of the goals.

a. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by proactively working to recruit, hire, and retain qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, including in a way that is inclusive and culturally competent, thereby providing for greater continuity and consistency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

Results and Progress: The agency recruited nationwide during the past cycle in an effort to fill vacant Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions. As a result of its efforts, all VR Counselor positions are now filled. In addition, all but one possesses a master's degree in either Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling, or Special Education; all but one possesses Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification; and all possess New Mexico State Licensure. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors hired are from various backgrounds and cultures and bring valuable language abilities to the team. The agency is committed to recruiting and retaining qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

b. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to the growing population of older workers, many of whom will be unable or unwilling to retrain for work in a field different from their current occupations, thereby enabling these older workers to become or remain successfully employed.

Results and Progress: The agency is committed to serving older workers in their desire to obtain or maintain employment. During PY 2022, the agency closed nine individuals aged 55 or above (three of whom are age 70 or above) in employment. This represented roughly one-third of all rehab closures during that year. As of this writing in September 2023, the agency has closed one additional older worker, with three more employed but not yet ready for closure.

c. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing appropriate vocational rehabilitation services that support the maintaining of a healthy lifestyle that is conducive to becoming and remaining successfully employed, thereby enabling a greater portion of agency consumers to become and remain successfully employed.

Results and Progress: The agency is committed to providing services that support a healthy lifestyle that will enable consumers to become and remain successfully employed. The agency has outfitted a top-notch gym at the Alamogordo Orientation Center which makes available both strength and cardio equipment. Regular use of the equipment enables students to build strength and stamina, both essential for success at the Orientation Center itself, in post-secondary education environments, and in work environments.

d. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing vocational rehabilitation training and counseling that is designed to enhance and improve the soft skills of consumers, which are becoming an increasing barrier to agency consumers becoming and remaining successfully employed.

Results and Progress: The agency emphasizes soft skills training at both its Alamogordo Orientation Center program and its Albuquerque Skills Center program.

Over the past few years, the Alamogordo Orientation Center and Albuquerque Skills Center collaborated to deliver the Business of blindness classes to students with disabilities participating in the Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP). Topics addressed included attendance at virtual conferences and conventions, taking risks, exploring various careers, making elevator speeches, writing resumes and cover letters, note taking (including collaborative notetaking), and time management.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have referred students to the Skills Center for soft skills and employability skills training as it relates to preparing for independent living and socialization. The Skills Center has been using two accessible curricula, for such training which is accessible to youth and adults who are blind or visually impaired and makes adaptations for specific needs related to integration with peers. The Skills Center and Orientation Center are sharing information about explored curricula and teaching methods.

The Alamogordo Orientation Center began taking a closer look at soft skills over the past few years. This included attention to punctuality, appropriate dress, professionalism, adaptability, flexibility, and accountability. Examples of this include showing up to meetings and classes on time, communicating effectively with staff and amongst each other. Effective communication is so important in that students are able to accomplish what might seem as simple as notifying their instructors when they are going to be absent from classes to resolving a conflict that might arise between peers.

The Orientation Center has recently transitioned to a process whereby students facilitate their own progress meetings at a certain point in their program. This results in students becoming more accountable for the progress they are making in their training program.

The Orientation Center is also working with students on professional dress and appearance and expects students to complete 1 to two mock interviews prior to their leaving in order to practice preparation and communication for this high-stakes situation.

Soft skills classes are often required as part of post-secondary degree programs and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are willing to pay for training in soft skills classes as necessary to meet the needs of program participants.

e. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by partnering and working with community colleges and One-Stop centers to more effectively utilize services available through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs.

Results and Progress: The agency will work cooperatively with the identified partner entities by designating specific liaisons and points of contact, by providing information, and by entering into cooperative agreements where appropriate.

f. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by working cooperatively with the New Mexico Department of Health so as to develop opportunities for competitive and integrated employment for persons who are blind or visually impaired, which will be accomplished by working in partnership with the Medical Assistance Division, the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, and the Behavioral Health Services Division.

Results and Progress: The agency has negotiated and signed a formal cooperative agreement with the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) that complies with the provisions of 34 CFR 361.24(f). The Memorandum of Agreement describes how the agency will collaborate, including through the provision of information by the agency to consumers receiving or eligible to receive the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The Commission surveys all consumers to make sure eligible consumers are participating in the Developmental Disabilities Waiver, and agency employees provide information about the Developmental Disabilities Waiver to parents

and guardians during Individualized Education Plan meetings. The goal is to encourage families to apply for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver sufficiently in advance so as to avoid a gap in supports when the student ages out of special education services. New Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provisions will now enable the agency to provide supported employment for up to 24 months and to provide up to 48 months of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. The agency also administers the Commission's Technology for Children Program in partnership with DOH. The program provides assistive technology devices to children who are blind or visually impaired, including blind or visually impaired children who may be eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The ultimate goal of such benefits counseling and guidance is to provide consumers with the supports needed to enable such consumers to more successfully participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program.

g. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Orientation Center to provide employment preparation training for adults and transition students, including through the addition of an apartment training facility to be constructed adjacent to the Center. The proposed apartment facility will increase the capacity of the Orientation Center, will enable the Orientation Center to provide more realistic training, will eliminate the need to rent costly and less appropriate private apartments, and will reduce the number of instances in which costly out-of-state training will be necessary to meet the needs of consumers.

Results and Progress: As more consumers are again comfortable with residential center training, Nine adults and five Students with Disabilities were served at the Orientation Center during PY 2022. The proposed apartment project has been constructed and a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on April 6, 2023. The apartments are currently being used as part of the adult program which began on August 14, 2023.

h. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Orientation Center to provide training for adults and transition students to compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by their inability to receive training or services during the pandemic, and to prepare them for new telework opportunities by providing them with enhanced technology training.

Results and Progress: During the Coronavirus Pandemic, students at the Alamogordo Orientation Center were served remotely. Now that the pandemic has largely subsided, Vocational Rehabilitation consumers are again receiving training in-person at the Orientation Center. The intensive skills training provided at the Orientation Center focuses on Orientation and Mobility, Braille literacy, assistive technology, shopping and meal preparation, note-taking, and other topics. These topics prepare students for post-secondary education and employment, and result in a greater likelihood of success in both education and work environments.

An emphasis is made on assistive technology training. The Orientation Center is planning a significant upgrade of its assistive technology during PY 2023, and, therefore, its capacity to deliver enhanced assistive technology training to center students.

i. Increase the number of consumers served through enhanced Outreach Activities; including media outreach, use of paid advertising, through increased collaboration with

ophthalmologists and optometrists, and through the use of the Technology for Children program to conduct outreach to school districts.

Results and Progress: The agency will continue to work to increase outreach to the identified groups using the recommended outreach methods. Counselors visit ophthalmologists in their territories to ensure that the medical community is aware of the Commission and the services that are provided. In addition, copies of the agency's annual report are sent to all ophthalmologists and optometrists in the state. The Executive Director and the Skills Center Coordinator presented to the American Academy of Ophthalmology Technicians on September 16, 2023.

Another important outreach activity is the Technology for Children program, which is also, a frequent point of first contact with the agency. The Technology for Children program provides information to the public, parents, and schools about the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program and services in a way that significantly enhances the agency transition services. It also provides technical assistance and support services that enhance the agency's ability to work cooperatively with school districts, including assisting in the establishment of cooperative agreements with the Commission. The agency has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Health and the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The MOA administers an annual allocation from DOH of \$80,000, designed to provide assistive technology that, for a disability other than blindness, would be considered durable medical equipment. The Technology for Children program places a special emphasis on providing assistive technology to economically disadvantaged and rural school districts. The Coordinator of the Technology for Children program and a member of her staff also speaks Spanish.

To further enhance the number of consumers and improve transition services, the Commission has signed 17 cooperative agreements with New Mexico school districts. These school districts include Aztec, Bloomfield, Carlsbad, Cloudcroft, Clovis, Deming, Española, Farmington, Gadsden, Gallup-McKinley County, Las Cruces, Los Lunas, Moriarty-Edgewood, Pecos, Portales, Roswell, and Taos.

The agreements were signed by the Executive Director in meetings with the Special Education Director of each school district. The Commission is also actively working to obtain cooperative agreements with additional school districts, including Albuquerque Public Schools, Alamogordo Public Schools, and Santa Fe Public Schools. The Commission also has a cooperative agreement with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and with the Central Region Education Cooperative.

j. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes of transition consumers by providing enhanced Pre-Employment Transition Services, including assistive technology where appropriate as a part of an Individualized Plan for Employment, by providing assistive technology through the Technology for Children Program, by conducting increased outreach activities, by conducting educational activities to meet the specific needs of transition students, by increasing proficient use of Braille and Braille math, and by providing services designed to compensate for any deficiencies in these areas that may have been caused by their inability to receive training or services during the pandemic.

Results and Progress: Prior to the Coronavirus Pandemic, The state of New Mexico had 29 persons with National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB) certification (eleven Commission staff and 18 K-12 teachers), giving New Mexico the highest per capita representation of NCUEB certified teachers in the nation at the time. Unfortunately, many of those certifications lapsed during the pandemic. The agency is ramping up its support of Braille literacy with the following schedule of preparatory workshops and examinations during PY 2022 and PY 2023 for agency employees, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Educational Assistants, and Braille Transcriptionists serving K-12 students in the state:

- * December 10, 2022, NCUEB Examination, Alamogordo
- * February 2, 2023, NCUEB Preparatory Workshop, Albuquerque
- * September 21, 2023, NCUEB Preparatory Workshop, Albuquerque
- * October 21, 2023, NCUEB Examination, Alamogordo
- * December 2, 2023, NCUEB Examination, Albuquerque
- * December 9, 2023, NCUEB Examination, Albuquerque

The agency will continue its full support of Braille literacy with additional preparatory workshops and examinations in coming years.

The Commission and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have agreed that the MINIMUM appropriate age for provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services in New Mexico is 14, unless special or extraordinary circumstances exist that make an earlier age appropriate. Should special circumstances exist that make an earlier age appropriate, the minimum age for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services shall be 10 years of age. Should extraordinary circumstances exist that make an even earlier age appropriate, the minimum age for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services shall be 8 years of age.

The Commission has sought to be involved in Individualized Education Plan meetings for transition consumers starting at age 14 for many years. The agency also operates the Students in Transition to Employment Program in Albuquerque, Alamogordo, and through community placements throughout New Mexico.

Beginning in PY 2017, the Commission partnered with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on a contract with the Central Region Education Cooperative (CREC) to deliver pre-employment transition services to high school students across New Mexico. Under the agreement, Commission high school-age clients were included in job exploration counseling, counseling on post-secondary opportunities, self-advocacy training, and job skills training delivered by CREC staff. CREC job developers helped to place Commission high school students interested in work-based learning experiences, primarily during summers, but also in after-school or weekend jobs during the regular school year.

Effective in PY 2019, The Commission entered into its own Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with CREC. The purpose of the IGA is to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational and Pre-Employment Transition Services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission.

Additionally, the Commission initially signed a Governmental Services Agreement (GSA) with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) in May of 2019. Under this GSA, the Commission funds the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services that are provided by NMSBVI. The purpose is to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational and Pre-Employment Transition Services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission.

k. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing services in a way that genuinely honors the "informed choice" provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, enabling Commission consumers to have the opportunity to obtain employment at higher levels of compensation.

Results and Progress: The Commission uses a number of tools to "inform" the career choice of consumers, including career assessments, the Career Choice Questionnaire, job shadowing, and on-the-job training experiences. The Career Choice Questionnaire guides consumers in researching careers that they have identified either on their own or as a result of completion of an applicable career assessment instrument, helping them to ultimately select a career that is the best fit for themselves. The Commission encourages and supports careers requiring graduate education and careers in self-employment.

The State Rehabilitation Council met in a special meeting on March 26, 2021, and approved a survey to assess the satisfaction of vocational rehabilitation consumers. The results were reported to the Council on June 22, 2021. The survey showed that 81 percent of persons served by the Commission were satisfied with the services they received.

l. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing a quality and expanding Newsline system that gives consumers access to employment listings, business news, and other important information, including through both local Newsline and through NFB-Newsline.

Results and Progress: The Commission has provided access to NFB-Newsline, including in coordination with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. NEWSLINE for the Blind continues to grow yearly, relying on a staff of two and over 100 volunteers. The Agency incorporated NFB Newsline as a part of Newsline services in 2002, and intends to continue NFB Newsline in future years. Newsline is an important part of the Commission's outreach program to identify and serve most significantly disabled persons who are minorities, and individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation or supported employment program. Newsline provides access to state and national publications to individuals in all portions of New Mexico, including in the most rural portions of the state. Newsline started with 200 listeners in the Albuquerque area in 1991 and has grown to more than 5000 listeners. The local Newsline and NFB-Newsline have publications that include newspapers from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Carlsbad, Deming, Farmington, Las Cruces, and Roswell, and recently added the Gallup Independent. NEWSLINE also has a Spanish language news category. NFB-Newsline offers prompts in Spanish and has several Spanish language publications, including the recent addition of CNN News in Spanish. Additionally, NFB Newsline recently began offering access to the Navajo Times and Native News Online. NFBNewsline voices can also be customized to meet the needs of individuals who are hard of hearing, and NFBNewsline offers the ability to download publications for reading on a Braille display. This

feature enables individuals who are deaf-blind to access the entire selection of more than 500 national newspapers and magazines.

m. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by innovatively using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it for provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Results and Progress: The Skills Center was dedicated in April 2012 and has been used to host a number of events over the years. The Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) is a summer employment and training program for youth between the ages of 14 and 21. The traditional STEP program was not offered during the COVID-summer of 2020, but has been increasing in-person activities since then in conjunction with remote offerings. The Skills Center will continue as the training location for the Albuquerque STEP program in coming years. The Skills Center also hosted a number of meetings and trainings for blind entrepreneurs for the Business Enterprise Program, including entrepreneur trainings, facility selection evaluations, Committee meetings, and the semi-annual meetings of BEP blind entrepreneurs. The facility was also used for vocational evaluations and testing, student seminars, Braille seminars, and college prep workshops. The Skills Center was also used as a meeting place for the State Rehabilitation Council, the New Mexico Association for Higher Education and Disability, the New Mexico State Use Council, and for other programs related to vocational rehabilitation. Additional staff was added during PY 2016 and 2017 in order to expand VR related trainings to be offered at the Skills Center.

During PY 2022 and PY 2023, the Commission created a variety of opportunities for students with disabilities to explore interesting careers. Sessions focused on the following:

Multiple presentations on basic scientific terminology, the scientific method, chemical reactions, accessible equipment for scientists, and careers in the physical sciences. New Mexico is home to Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratories, so science is a major part of the New Mexico economy.

- A six-part program on careers in music and entertainment;
- Presentation on careers in finance;
- Presentation on the Business Enterprise Program;
- Presentation on voice acting;
- Presentation on careers in forensic science.
- Presentation on careers in science-based mystery novels or movie scripts. New Mexico has a very vibrant film industry. Netflix is planning a \$1 billion expansion of its existing studio complex to include an additional 300 acres and a significant expansion of its production capability. NBC Universal also has a large post-production facility in Albuquerque.

During 2023, the agency's executive director began discussions with the Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD), the administrator of the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP), to allocate NMTAP funds to the Commission for the Blind. The allocation of

\$75,000, was used to purchase a variety of Computers (including Macintosh), Pearl cameras, note-takers, Braille displays, Braille embossers, Braille translation software, screen readers, optical character recognition packages, and magnification hardware/software. The purpose of the technology acquisition was twofold: 1. To demonstrate options available to VR consumers when it comes to technology; and 2. To train consumers on the use of the chosen technology. The actual funding and acquisition took place in FY14. New equipment and software was purchased in Summer 2018 and Summer 2019 in order to keep the Skills Center Technology Lab current, and more purchases are planned for PY 2023.

n. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers and potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, including using it to provide them with training to compensate for any deficiencies in skills that may have been caused by their inability to receive training or services during the pandemic, and to prepare them for new telework opportunities by providing them with enhanced technology training.

Results and Progress: During the Coronavirus Pandemic, students at the Albuquerque Skills Center were served remotely. In-person training options have been re-introduced as consumers have become more comfortable with in-person training. Remote training remains an effective way to serve consumers in rural parts of New Mexico. The skills training provided at the Orientation Center includes Orientation and Mobility, Braille literacy, assistive technology, shopping and meal preparation, and note-taking, with an emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities. This training prepares students for post-secondary education and employment, and results in a greater likelihood of success in both education and work environments.

The Skills Center emphasizes assistive technology training. The Skills Center is planning a significant upgrade of its assistive technology during PY 2023, and, therefore, its capacity to deliver enhanced assistive technology training to Skills Center students.

o. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the provision of independent living training to vocational rehabilitation consumers, including through the proposed apartment training facility at the Orientation Center.

Results and Progress: VR consumers have options for receiving necessary independent living skills training: they can receive it in their home communities by rehab teachers assigned to each community, receive services at the residential training center in Alamogordo, or receive training at out-of-state training centers. The Skills Center in Albuquerque is also increasing capacity to deliver needed training. Technology training can also be delivered remotely. In these ways, VR consumers throughout New Mexico can receive the VR related independent living skills training that they need.

In each case, counselors refer consumers to the rehab teachers, specifying the VR-related tasks that need to be completed so that the rehab teachers can develop lessons that will build the skills necessary to complete those tasks.

The Staff Manager who supervises the Independent Living Program possesses both National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as well as National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB). The Rehab Teachers are the front-line staff providing the initial instruction in Orientation & Mobility for vocational rehabilitation consumers. The Commission

also contracts with private O&M instructors as necessary to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers across the state. The Commission has also provided professional O&M training to the teachers at the Orientation Center.

The agency recognizes the benefit of providing training at the Orientation Center that is realistic and appropriate to the individual needs of consumers, and has constructed apartments that will be used to provide more realistic and appropriate training beginning in PY 2022. The agency also hosted independent living trainings at the Skills Center during PY 2023. One of these trainings provided training to rehab teachers on adult learning theory; IOS and Android devices; Google Assistant, Siri, and Alexa voice assistants; JAWS and NVDA screen readers; Orientation and Mobility; and traveling using a walker or wheelchair.

p. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the provision of increased telework employment opportunities, including opportunities in rural portions of the state.

Results and Progress: During PY 2022 and through the first quarter of PY 2023, the agency secured one remote work opportunity for a vocational rehabilitation consumer. In addition to the one closure, four consumers are in Employment Status in remote-work positions as of this writing in September 2023. The agency is also pursuing remote work opportunities for students with disabilities who participate in the agency's Students in Transition to Employment Program, which combines a work-based learning experience with blindness skills training. During Summer 2022 and Summer 2023, the agency secured two remote-work positions for STEP participants. The agency continues to pursue remote work opportunities for both adults and students with disabilities, in particular for those consumers living in rural areas of New Mexico.

The agency continues to provide training that can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of consumers who secure remote work.

The Alamogordo Orientation Center and Albuquerque Skills Center conducted an advanced braille class over zoom that can help prepare consumers to work remotely. It gave students an opportunity to not only learn a valuable skill, but to problem solve using assistive technology, a quality that is often essential for blind individuals who are often the only blind employee in the organization.

In the coming years, The Orientation Center and Skills Center plan to provide enhanced training which explores collaborative work in Microsoft Office On-line and in the Google Workspace, which should also improve the ability for blind and visually impaired individuals to succeed in remote work environments.

q. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers who are Deaf-Blind through collaboration and partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with the Community Outreach Programs for the Deaf, and with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, including through the delivery of assistive technology to consumers who are Deaf-Blind.

Results and Progress: The agency has assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor to take the lead on services related to consumers who are Deaf-Blind. The agency also works with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to coordinate provision of services to persons who are Deaf-Blind. The agency works with a variety of other partners, including the Commission for

Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (now dissolved and replaced by Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services), the Helen Keller National Center, and the Deaf-Blind Task Force. The agency also participates in the annual Deaf-Blind Awareness Day at the State Capitol.

The Commission maintains good working relationships with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, as well as Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services. The goal is to support the needs of deafblind consumers in the state. An important part of the relationship is ICanConnect, which is a part of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). The Commission entered into an agreement with COPD to administer the program in New Mexico, but as COPD has dissolved, the I Can Connect program is now being administered by Mr. Larry Rhodes, who retired as the COPD director when the organization was dissolved. The Commission will reach out to Mr. Rhodes to establish a new agreement regarding the I Can Connect Program. Also, in 2006, the Commission entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired designed to further enhance transition services for students who are Deaf-Blind. The Commission also serves on the New Mexico Deaf-Blind Task Force, which brings together stakeholders to discuss ways to improve services to deaf-blind individuals in the state. During the last state plan cycle, the Commission utilized these MOUs to provide enhanced services to deaf-blind consumers. NFB Newline will also provide deaf-blind persons with access to a variety of New Mexico newspapers, including those in Farmington, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Roswell; in addition to Spanish-language news sources, the Navajo Times, and Native News Online.

r. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) by shortening the time required for vendors to complete the required training, including by using Randolph-Sheppard Act training offered by the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Results and Progress: The agency has adopted the Business Enterprise Licensee Training Program offered by the National Association of Blind Merchants at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind as the training provider for BEP vendors and is working with New Mexico programs to create a local provider so that food preparation and cooking methods can be taught locally.

Supported Employment Goals

Specific goals for PY 2022 include:

1. At least three closures in competitive integrated settings;
2. Closures averaging at least minimum wage (\$14.03 in Santa Fe as of March 2023 and \$12.00 elsewhere in New Mexico as of January 2023).
3. Closures averaging at least fifteen hours worked per week.

During PY 2022, the Commission served 18 supported employment consumers at some point during the year and achieved 2 employment outcomes in integrated/competitive settings. The average wage was \$17.50 per hour with an average of 20.5 hours worked per week. The Commission continues to work closely with family members, community organizations, and other state agencies in an effort to provide the most comprehensive services possible. The Commission has worked closely and creatively with each of these groups to fund and deliver

training services, transportation services, job development services, job coaching services, and a variety of other ongoing services.

Consumers no longer interested in work: Often, consumers that would otherwise require supported employment services say they are interested in work and a VR case is opened. Unfortunately, their interest is often the result of suggestions and pressure from family members or service providers. Despite offers of support in the process of transitioning to employment, their interest in employment sometimes wanes as they come to understand the changes that are forthcoming when employment becomes part of their regular schedule.

Supported employment youth: Currently, the agency has 15 consumers coded supported employment, nine of whom are adults, and six of whom are youth with the most significant disabilities (four of whom are age 14-21). We expect some of these consumers will participate in our summer Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP).

COVID-19 Pandemic: As you would expect, the COVID-19 Pandemic created challenges across the nation, the state, the agency, and the lives of individual consumers.

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

Employment Rate, Second Quarter After Exit,

NM, PY 2022,

Negotiated Level, 40.0%

Adjustment Factor, 5.3%,

Adjusted Level, 45.3%

Actual Level, 41.3%,

Performance Assessment, 91.0%

PY 2021, NM 39.3%, NM Blind 21.1%,

PY 2022, NM 41.3%, NM Blind 29.4%,

* Comments:

The Commission was certain that its performance during PY 2021 and 2022 was not reflective of its actual employment rate. An in-depth analysis identified aspects of its post-exit survey process requiring improvement that have now been made. The Commission will try to determine why consumers who did leave their employment did so and whether the Commission could have intervened to help mitigate the issues that led to the consumer leaving their employment. Additionally, the Commission will join the Statewide Wage Interchange System

during the latter part of PY 2023. The above approaches should improve performance results for this measure in PY 2024 and beyond.

Median Earnings, Second Quarter After Exit,

NM, PY 2022

Negotiated Level, \$4500

Adjustment Factor, minus \$538

Adjusted Level, \$3962

Actual Level, \$5033,

Performance Assessment, 127.0%,

PY 2021, NM \$5182, NM Blind \$12,602,

PY 2022, NM \$5033, NM Blind \$6854,

* Comments:

The Commission's performance in PY 2021 was an anomaly, based on a relatively small number of closures combined with a relatively high number of high-dollar closures. Generally, however, the Commission focuses on quality rather than quantity. The Commission works very hard to help consumers get career employment in positions commensurate with their education and experience, striving to not settle for less. Again, the Commission will join the Statewide Wage Interchange System during the latter part of PY 2023, which will help to provide verification of earnings going forward.

Employment Rate, Fourth Quarter After Exit,

NM, PY 2022,

Negotiated Level, 35.0%

Adjustment Factor, 3.9%

Adjusted Level, 38.9%

Actual Level, 40.8%

Performance Assessment, 104.8%

PY 2021, NM 36.4%, NM Blind 17.9%,

PY 2022, NM 40.8%, NM Blind 31.7%,

* Comments:

The Commission was certain that its performance during PY 2021 and 2022 was not reflective of its actual employment rate. An in-depth analysis identified aspects of its post-exit survey process requiring improvement that have now been made. The Commission will try to determine why consumers who did leave their employment did so and whether the Commission could have intervened to help mitigate the issues that led to the consumer leaving their employment. Additionally, the Commission will join the Statewide Wage Interchange System during the latter part of PY 2023. The above approaches should improve performance results for this measure in PY 2024 and beyond.

Credential Attainment Rate,

NM, PY 2022,

Negotiated Level, 26.0%

Adjustment Factor, 10.3%

Adjusted Level, 36.3%

Actual Level, 37.6%

Performance Assessment, 103.5%

PY 2021, NM 32.9%, NM Blind 26.7%,

PY 2022, NM 37.6%, NM Blind 64.3%,

* Comments:

The Commission believes its performance during PY 2021 was the result of incomplete data. The Commission has improved its processes in this area, as reflected in PY 2022 results. Additionally, many Commission consumers are pursuing careers which require post-secondary education.

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).

The Commission has engaged in several innovation and expansion activities in PY 2022. The funding of these activities exceeded the 1.5% of 110 dollars generally allocated to innovation and expansion efforts. These activities will continue in PY 2024. The agency supports the funding and program activities of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The agency recognizes that the SRC is an integral and valuable partner in its efforts to provide services to vocational rehabilitation consumers. The Agency assumes all costs incurred for all regularly scheduled meetings, subcommittees and special meetings. This includes expenses related to securing meeting facilities, members' travel and per diem expenses, teleconference meetings, interpreters, clerical support, and office supplies and materials. The Agency provides a staff person who prepares the agendas, minutes, and other materials as necessary for each scheduled meeting. The Agency provides a staff person to schedule and make all necessary arrangements

for Public Hearings and town forums. The SRC is an equal partner in the development of the State Plan, and actively provides input for the Manual of Operating Procedures, agency policies, Orientation Center, and other matters pertaining to the Agency's programs and activities. The Commission sponsors NFB Newsline. This is an augment to the existing NEWSLINE for the Blind. NFB Newsline enables consumers to read over 500 national newspapers, which include Spanish-language publications, Native American publications, and New Mexico newspapers, enhancing their ability to rapidly access information that is increasingly essential for success in both the academic and professional environments.

Two capital improvement appropriations, one of \$1,445,195 on July 1, 2019, and the second of \$177,000 on July 1, 2021, from the New Mexico Legislature were used to support the initiative to construct a fourplex apartment complex adjacent to the agency's Alamogordo Orientation Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers. The construction was completed in the third quarter of PY 2022 and a ribbon-cutting ceremony was conducted on April 6, 2023. The apartment facility is already being used and will increase the capacity of the Orientation Center, will enable the Orientation Center to provide more realistic training, will eliminate the need to rent costly and less appropriate private apartments, and will reduce the number of instances in which costly out-of-state training will be necessary to meet the needs of consumers.

The Commission has adopted a policy to support consumer attendance at division/special interest group meetings and seminars/workshops held during national consumer organization conventions. In order to receive the support, the consumer's vocational goal must be directly related to the particular division/special interest group meeting or seminar/workshop. The Commission, with the support of our SRC, believes that attendance at related division/special interest group meetings and seminar/workshops can enhance the consumer's ability to achieve their vocational goal. Benefits would include learning about current developments in their field, meeting, and networking with individuals who are successful in their fields, learning about the use and accessibility of career-specific technology, learning how blind and visually impaired individuals in the field use assistive technology successfully, and learning techniques that would enable them to succeed in their vocational training/education program and ultimately in their chosen field.

PY 2023 marked the seventeenth year of a MOA with the Department of Health. The MOA administers an allocation from DOH of \$80,000, designed to provide assistive technology that, for a disability other than blindness, would be considered durable medical equipment. This initiative serves blind children that are both transition-age and those not yet transition-age. A total of fourteen children were served by this initiative in PY 2023.

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:

(B) VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided

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.

The agency has chosen not to receive Supported Employment funds.

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.

Vocational rehabilitation services may include a comprehensive assessment as provided under the basic vocational rehabilitation program, job site assessment, and other evaluations to determine possible benefits from supported employment to consumers with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities. Supported employment services include job coaching, intensive job skills training and related certifications, social skills training, tools and supplies, transportation services, regular observation, and supervision of the individual, and regular contact with the employer, consumer, parent, family members, guardians, advocates, or other authorized representatives of the individual and other suitable professionals. The utilization of natural support systems as well as the provision of appropriate services under the basic vocational rehabilitation program is available to support employment consumers.

Extent of Services: The adult services offered under Supported Employment are determined on an individualized basis depending on the needs of the consumer. Supported employment services generally do not extend beyond a 24-month period of time, an increase of six months as a result of WIOA. However, in some unusual circumstances, Supported Employment Services may be extended if it is determined appropriate and agreed upon in the IPE. To be determined appropriate, there must be a reasonable basis to believe that ongoing supports can be obtained within a relatively brief period of time, and that a disruption or loss of employment would be avoided by the brief continuation of the Supported Employment Services. Individuals who have stabilized on the job may be transitioned to extended services prior to reaching the 24 month limit, provided that the individual is receiving necessary on-going support services and other appropriate services provided by another state agency, a private non-profit organization, or an employer. The primary source of such support is through the Developmental Disabilities Waiver.

The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide supported employment services. As the consumer approaches the 24-month limit for supported employment services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural support for the provision of extended services. As with adult services, the youth services offered under Supported

Employment are determined on an individual basis depending on the needs of the consumer. Services to youth with the most significant disabilities begin at age 14, and include representation by Commission counselors at IEP meetings, support in school-based transition programs for youth aged 18-21, and summer job experiences. The Commission provides summer employment experiences for supported employment youth through its Students in Transition to Employment Program, which provides employment and training experiences at its Alamogordo training center, its Albuquerque Skills Center, and community-based placements throughout New Mexico.

The Commission provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities following the closure of their VR case for a period of up to four years or until the individual turns age 25. The Commission believes this is a particularly beneficial improvement within WIOA. The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide extended services. As the consumer approaches the limit for Commission funding of extended services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural support for the provision of extended services.

THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

The Commission provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities following the closure of their VR case for a period of up to four years or until the individual turns age 25. The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide extended services. As the consumer approaches the limit for Commission funding of extended services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural support for the provision of 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 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

Extent of Services: The adult services offered under Supported Employment are determined on an individualized basis depending on the needs of the consumer. Supported employment services generally do not extend beyond a 24-month period of time, an increase of six months as a result of WIOA. However, in some unusual circumstances, Supported Employment Services may be extended if it is determined appropriate and agreed upon in the IPE. To be determined appropriate, there must be a reasonable basis to believe that ongoing supports can be obtained within a relatively brief period of time, and that a disruption or loss of employment would be avoided by the brief continuation of the Supported Employment Services. Individuals who have stabilized on the job may be transitioned to extended services prior to reaching the 24 month limit, provided that the individual is receiving necessary on-going support services and other appropriate services provided by another state agency, a private non-profit organization, or an employer. The primary source of such support is through the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide supported employment services. As the consumer approaches the 24-month limit for supported

employment services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural support for the provision of extended services. As with adult services, the youth services offered under Supported Employment are determined on an individual basis depending on the needs of the consumer. Services to youth with the most significant disabilities begin at age 14, and include representation by Commission counselors at IEP meetings, support in school-based transition programs for youth aged 18-21, and summer job experiences. The Commission provides summer employment experiences for supported employment youth through its Students in Transition to Employment Program, which provides employment and training experiences at its Alamogordo training center, its Albuquerque Skills Center, and community-based placements throughout New Mexico.

The Commission provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities following the closure of their VR case for a period of up to four years or until the individual turns age 25. The Commission believes this is a particularly beneficial improvement within WIOA. The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide extended services. As the consumer approaches the limit for Commission funding of extended services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural support for the provision of extended services.

THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

The Commission provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities following the closure of their VR case for a period of up to four years or until the individual turns age 25. The Commission will use regular VR funds to provide extended services. As the consumer approaches the limit for Commission funding of extended services, the Commission will assist in the transition to DD Waiver funding and natural supports for the provision of extended services.

The agency has negotiated and signed a formal cooperative agreement with the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) that complies with the provisions of 34 CFR 361.24(f). The Memorandum of Agreement describes how the agency will collaborate, including through the provision of information by the agency to consumers receiving or eligible to receive the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The Commission surveys all consumers to make sure eligible consumers are participating in the Developmental Disabilities Waiver, and agency employees provide information about the Developmental Disabilities Waiver to parents and guardians during Individualized Education Plan meetings. The goal is to encourage families to apply for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver sufficiently in advance so as to avoid a gap in support when the student ages out of special education services. New Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provisions will now enable the agency to provide supported employment for up to 24 months and to provide up to 48 months of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. The agency also administers the Commission's Technology for Children Program in partnership with DOH. The program provides assistive technology devices to children who are blind or visually impaired, including blind or visually impaired children who may be eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The ultimate goal of such benefits counseling and guidance is to provide consumers with the support needed to enable such consumers to more successfully participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program.

Additionally, the Commission has cooperative agreements with the following tribal entities: Laguna-Acoma, Pueblo of Jemez, and The Navajo Nation.

On March 9, 2022, the Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager, the Skills Center Coordinator, and the Supported Employment Lead at the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Support Services (DDSD presented to a monthly virtual workshop, known as Connect and Collaborate, a service of the New Mexico Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMAER). This presentation focused on how the two agencies collaborate to provide supported employment services, especially to students with disabilities and youth.

In the past, the Agency has worked with the nonprofit organizations listed below for the provision of coordinated supported employment services to consumers who qualify for supported employment. Under the new supported employment provisions of WIOA, the Commission will be able to cover the cost of extended services for up to four years for youth with the most significant disabilities, or until the individuals reach the age of 25 and no longer meet the definition of a "youth with a disability", whichever comes first. Supported employment services begin after job placement. Vocational rehabilitation services such as assessment, job development and job placement are paid for with Title I funds. Although vocational rehabilitation services may be included in agreements/contracts along with supported employment services, Title VI funds are no longer being received by the agency and would not be used to procure VR services, since supported employment services begin at the time of job placement. The Commission will work with the providers listed below to expand the nature of Commission-funded extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services may be provided to consumers after successful case closure in order to maintain job stability. These services may include specialized tools and supplies, specialized training, and costs of needed services not otherwise available from long-term funding sources.

1. New Vistas Supported Employment Services, 2890 Trades West Road, Santa Fe, NM.

Services included job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain stability on the job, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

2. Tobosa Developmental Services, 1219 West Summit, Roswell, NM, 88201 Tobosa

Developmental Services provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain job stability, the facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The populations served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

3. Zia Therapy Center Inc., 900 W. 1st, Alamogordo, NM. Zia Therapy provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain job stability, the facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The

populations served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

4. Bonnie Harbin-Quintana Harbin & Associates, Phone: (505) 450-8969, Harbin_1@msn.com, Services included job assessment, job development and placement, intensive on-the-job skills training, and other training and support in order to achieve and maintain job stability. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

5. Jacqueline P Beck-Manheimer, Phone: 505-948-9266, JacquelineBM17@gmail.com, Services included job assessment, job development and placement, intensive on-the-job skills training, and other training and support in order to achieve and maintain job stability. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

6. Center for Function & Creativity, 223 Montano Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107, Provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

7. Mandy's Farm, 7511 4th Street NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107, (505) 503-1141, Provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

8. An Open Door LLC, 2445 Missouri, Suite B, Las Cruces, NM 88001, (575) 382-2107; Provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

9. Chris Williams, 575.649.1066.

Provides job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, and facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

10. Armando, AD Employment Services Inc., 915.228.9929.

Provides job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, and facilitation of

socialization and communication with coworkers. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

11. Alice Marshall, 575-760-3199, aliceemarshall@gmail.com.

Services include job assessment, job development and placement, intensive on-the-job skills training, and other training and support in order to achieve and maintain job stability. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

12. Jacqueline Zamora, 505-315-5359, Jackiezamora@comcast.net.

Services include job assessment, job development and placement, intensive on-the-job skills training, and other training and support in order to achieve and maintain job stability. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

13. Gabriela Ronquillo, gronquillo@crecnm.org. Office (505) 889-3412, Cell (505) 267-2690.

Provides job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

Similar programs in other New Mexico communities will be contacted, as appropriate, to determine their capacity to participate in collaborative efforts regarding the Commission's supported employment program.

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 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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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)
NA	332	332	\$7,347,500	NA

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

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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)
NA	20	20	\$52,000	NA

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. 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.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 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 State 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 OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. 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;

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.

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Executive Director	1	1	1
Deputy Director for Field Services	1	1	1
Program Manager for Vocational Rehabilitation Programs	1	1	1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Supervisor	1	1	1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	7	7	7
Business Outreach Coordinator	0	1	1
Program Manager for Assistive Technology	1	1	1
Assistive Technology Specialist	3	3	3
Program Manager for Business Enterprise Program	1	1	1
IL Staff Manager	1	1	1
Rehab/IL Teacher	8	9	9

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Deputy Director for Adult Orientation Center	1	1	1
Orientation Center Instructor Supervisor	0	1	1
Orientation Center Instructor	5	6	6
Orientation Center Dormitory Supervisor	1	1	1
Orientation Center Dormitory Workers	2	3	3
Orientation Center STEP Dorm Workers	0	.99	.99
Coordinator of Technology for Children	1	1	1
Skills Center Instructor	0	1	1
Technical Support Providers	2	2	2
STEP Instructors	.67	1.34	1.34
Business Operations Specialist	5	6	6
Newsline Coordinator	1	1	1
Newsline Weekend Coordinator	.2	.2	.2
Newsline Assistant	.8	.8	.8
Maintenance and Repair Worker	3	3	3
Executive Secretary	1	1	1
Secretary	8	9	9
Reader/Driver	8	10	10
Deputy Director for Finance and Administration	1	1	1
Accountant/Auditor	1	1	1

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Accounts Payable Supervisor	1	1	1
Finance Manager	1	1	1
Purchasing Agent	1	1	1
HR, Training, and Labor Specialist	1	1	1
ADA/ADR Coordinator	0	1	1
IT Technology Officer	1	1	1
IT Technology Specialist	1	1	1

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

Projections of staff needs in five years based upon current consumer trends would require the continued employment of eight counselors to maintain the present ratio of one counselor for every 50 to 75 cases. The Commission will maintain the present ratio of one counselor for every 50 to 75 cases to assure optimum services to consumers. It is apparent that improvements in service delivery will not necessarily rely upon expanded numbers of staff, but rather upon the qualities and training of personnel in the existing personnel configuration. The Agency will continue to provide annual intensive staff training, as well as periodic training to meet specific identified needs. In addition, the Agency has implemented the Accessible Web-Based Activity and Reporting Environment (AWARE) case management system, which has freed additional time for counselors to serve consumers. Training on the AWARE program began in August of 1999 and is conducted on an ongoing basis. The Agency is serving all consumers that are referred for services, and it is not anticipated that there will be any significant increase in the number of consumers seeking services.

1:50

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

400

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.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
New Mexico Highlands University	Rehabilitation Counseling	18	14
New Mexico Highlands University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	8	5
New Mexico State University	Orientation & Mobility	14	4
Louisiana Tech University	Orientation & Mobility	4	2
Louisiana Tech University	Rehab Teaching for the Blind	5	5
Western New Mexico University	Bachelors of Applied Sciences in Rehabilitation Counseling	25	8
Western New Mexico University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	8	1

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.

Commission personnel will meet with public and university personnel to review options for enabling the Commission's rehabilitation counselors to meet certification requirements. The current and projected personnel needs for vocational rehabilitation counselors are stable, and are not expected to increase. This projection of personnel needs is based on the implementation of the AWARE case management program and a trend towards stable vocational rehabilitation caseloads statewide. However, the Commission is aware of changing demographics which may impact this, including the aging of the work force and an increasing rate of blind infants and children who have disabilities in addition to blindness. There are currently seven counselor positions, one counselor supervisor that carries a caseload, and one program manager over the VR Counselor team in the vocational rehabilitation program. As

previously discussed, the Executive Director of the Commission and his/her designee will continue to meet with university personnel to provide appropriate training to the rehabilitation counselor team. The Agency also actively recruits individuals who come from minority backgrounds or who have disabilities, including posting of job announcements on the "blind jobs" and "Rehab Professionals" list services and other blindness related list services. The agency also provides internships and recruits graduates of the New Mexico Highlands rehabilitation counselor program, which generally includes representation from minority populations as well as candidates who speak Spanish and Native American languages. The Commission has a Memorandum of Understanding with New Mexico Highlands University, located in Las Vegas, New Mexico, which is discontinuing its program in Rehabilitation Counseling in favor of a program in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling with a wider scope. The program manager serves on the NMHU Counseling Department Advisory Committee and is therefore both able to keep abreast of trends in the personnel preparation arena and provide feedback to the committee regarding the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services in the field. The New Mexico Highlands program is CACREP accredited. The MOU with New Mexico Highlands also offers support of intern placements whenever possible and the Commission was able to host an intern during the latter half of PY 23. The Commission will continue its positive relationship with New Mexico Highlands University to assure that NMHU students consider employment with the Commission. Half of the eight current VR counselors received their master's degree in either Rehabilitation Counseling or Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling from Highlands University. Graduates from NMHU often include representation from minority populations as well as candidates who speak Spanish. Although the agency encourages its counselor staff to attend the Highlands University program, the agency recognizes that, depending on individual situations, distance education programs offered by other universities may also serve staff education needs. As such, the Commission has also inquired of the counselor training programs at other universities, including the University of North Texas (part of a well-established consortium between the University of North Texas, San Diego State University, and Georgia State University); as well as the counselor program at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. New Mexico State University had sponsored a graduate program in Orientation and Mobility. Two Commission staff members completed the NMSU O and M program in past years, although neither of them are still with the agency. The Commission also recruits Orientation and Mobility and Rehab Teachers for the Blind from Louisiana Tech University. Their Programs emphasize non-visual instruction and the Structured Discovery Model. This model is consistent with the training philosophy of the Commission's Orientation Center in Alamogordo. Many of the Commission's Orientation Center staff have completed the Rehab Teaching for the Blind program at Louisiana Tech while working for the Commission, while both cane travel teachers at the Orientation Center completed the Orientation and Mobility program at Louisiana Tech. In addition, many of the staff who completed the Rehab Teaching and Orientation and Mobility programs at Louisiana Tech have gone on to receive certification in those fields from the National Professional Blindness Certification Board.

The Commission has sponsored seminars and exams leading to certification in Braille competency since 2008. This effort has included school teachers, and as a result, New Mexico now has more Braille certified teachers per capita than any other state.

Other training for rehabilitation professionals in the fields of blindness, deaf-blind and related disabilities such as diabetes has been continually provided by the Agency to

existing professional and support staff. It is anticipated that these efforts will enable the Agency to meet federal certification requirements over the foreseeable future. The Commission will provide additional training in key areas, such as those related to transition services, career assessment, and job placement. The agency currently uses a manual system for the tracking of data related to each counselor, their training programs and data directly pertinent to the CSPD requirements. A record of the transcripts and course work completed by each counselor is maintained in a file and is used to track progress in achieving the necessary academic requirements.

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.

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

Vocational rehabilitation counselors attend regular bi-monthly training coordinated by the Program Manager for VR Programs. The training regularly addresses technology issues, training center issues, employment services issues, transition, post-secondary education and training, and training on various state and local services.

Recent presentations from national, state and local agencies and organizations included:

Motivational Interviewing with Pre-ETS Consumers presented by Oregon Commission for the Blind Mental Health within Native Communities: A story of Resilience, Recovery, and Employment presented by the White House and DOL working with Consumers with Criminal Backgrounds presented by VR-TAC QE Ethical Dilemmas Working with Students with a Disability, Educators, and Families presented by SVRI UW Stout Rural and Remote Service Provision in Vocational Rehabilitation presented by VR-TAC QI. 2022 Native American Special Education Conference presented by EPICS Updates to the CRCC Code of Professional Ethics, presented by VR-TAC QE. 2023 Innovation Inspiration Expo presented by SVRI UW Stout. Applied Ethics: Ethical Decision Making presented by AERBVI. Concepts of Job Development presented by Center for Development and Disability. Assistive Technology Conference 23 presented by NM TAP. Domestic Violence Among People with Disabilities presented by Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association. Work Incentives Webinar presented by Center for Development and Disability Emerging Disabilities presented by MSU-Billings. World of Work Inc. Administrator training presented by WOWI. Interpreting Vocational Rehabilitation for

Deafblind and Deaf: Comparative Ethics presented by Nevada Department for Health and Human Services. 2023 Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment presented by Center for Development and Disability. Disability Rights and the Fight to End Subminimum Wages presented by Virginia Commonwealth University DRRP. Windmills Train the Trainer presented by UA Currents. Youth Apprenticeships in Rehabilitation Counseling presented by VR-TAC QM. Affirmative Care for Individuals in the LGBTQ+ Community presented by St. Cloud State University. Section 508 Compliance and Federal Employees presented by US Access Board. Updates to the CRCC Code of Professional Ethics, Responding to Contemporary Needs presented by AERBVI. Northern New Mexico Work-based Learning Summit presented by Northern NM Work-Based Coalition. Traumatic Brain Injury: What is it and how does it manifest presented by UK Human Development Institute. Implications of Long-Covid presented by VR-TAC QM. The Art of Flourishing: Positive Psychology presented by Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association. State and Tribal VR Working Together: Partnerships That Allow Students and Youth with Disabilities to Succeed presented by GWU – CIDVR. Horizons of New Mexico on Opportunities through the State Use Act; and Job Corps as a Career Pathway for Youth and Young Adults presented by DOL

i. 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.

VR Counselors participate in biweekly and quarterly in-services that focus on agency policies, procedures, and best practices within the field of vocational rehabilitation. Counselors routinely attend lunch and learns offered by the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute and the Pennsylvania and Texas Rehabilitation Associations. The following is a sample of the trainings offered by many of the RRTCs and TACs that the VR Counselors have taken:

AER Rehabilitation Counseling and Employment Division:

- Applied Ethics – Ethical Decision-Making – December 2022

CIT - VR:

- Engaging the Private Sector: Strategies for Achieving Better Employment Outcomes
- Part 1 and 2 - State and Tribal VR Working Together: Partnerships That Allow Students and Youth with Disabilities to Succeed
- Virtual Mini Conference:
- Understanding Long COVID – Implications for Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals
- LGBTQ+ three part series

NRRTC:

- Most of their VR courses.

NTACT:C

- Re-Imagining Student and Youth Engagement: Awareness to Action

2024 NTACT:C Capacity Building Institute

- Mini Pre-ETS training
- SVRI
- Innovation Inspiration Expo – 2022
- Innovation Inspiration Expo – 2023
- Innovation Inspiration Expo – 2024

UA Currents:

- ABC's of Cultural Competence
- Diversity and Inclusive Leadership Certification (VR Program Manager)

VCU RRTC:

- State of the Science on Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- State of the Science on Employment of Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities
- Twenty-Two Cents an Hour: Disability Rights and the Fight to End Subminimum Wages
- The Job Search Process for Individuals with Criminal Backgrounds Webinar

VRTAC -QE:

- Veterans and VR: Challenges for Veterans with Criminal Backgrounds Rural and Remote Service Provision in Vocational Rehabilitation Webinar
- RETAIN Kentucky Return to Work and Stay at Work Model Webinar: Strategies for Helping Workers with Disabilities Maintain Quality Employment
- National Symposium on Quality Employment – 2023
- National Symposium on Quality Employment – 2024
- Self-Employment: Who, What, Where, and How to Close, Whew

VRTAC-QM:

- Updates to the CRCC Code of Professional Ethics
- Credential Attainment Webinar
- Working with VR Customers with Criminal Backgrounds

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.

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

The New Mexico Commission for the Blind continues to monitor and update the comprehensive system of personnel development each year, to ensure that an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals are available to the Commission. Qualified counselors are those that have earned Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification, are eligible to sit for the CRC examination, or have attained a New Mexico License in Rehabilitation Counseling under the master's level requirements of the state license, as described below.

A. master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from a regionally accredited college or university. This requirement shall be satisfied by meeting the requirements of Paragraphs (1) or (2) of Subsection A below.

(1) A master's degree awarded by a New Mexico college or university must incorporate the New Mexico Public Education Department's approved competencies in rehabilitation counseling.

(2) A master's degree awarded by a college or university outside of New Mexico must be for a rehabilitation counseling program approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

B. Master's degree in school counseling, vocational counseling or other related field and the provisions of Paragraphs (1) or (2) of Subsection B below

(1) one (1) year of experience in rehabilitation counseling, or (2) fifteen (15) semester hours of credit in the rehabilitation counseling competency areas of vocational/transition assessment, medical aspects of disability, psychosocial and/or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, issues and practices in rehabilitation counseling, or placement aspects of rehabilitation counseling. All but one of the VR counselors and VR supervisory staff have at least a master's degree. At present, five of the Agency's seven counselors have CRC certification, all seven possess state licensure, and one holds a bachelor's degree and is applying to graduate programs in VR Counseling during PY 2023. In addition, both the VR counselor supervisor and the program manager over the VR counselor team also hold both CRC and state licensure. The existing staffing configuration will include current staff as well as new staff hired to fill any positions that should become vacant. As turnover occurs due to retirement or staff leaving their positions, the Agency will make it a high priority to promptly fill any vacant counselor positions with CRC Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The desired academic qualification for a new counselor is a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. If the pool of candidates does not include a person possessing the desired qualifications, the minimum degree will be a bachelor's degree with a requirement that the counselor obtain

either CRC certification or alternative state licensure within a maximum of four (4) years of the date of hiring. State licensure was enacted in 2000. The agency has set aside funds for counselor training to help counselors meet academic standards.

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.

The agency's State Rehabilitation Council has affirmed its desire that the agency continue to maintain the above qualifications requirements for its VR counselors. In view of new WIOA requirements, the agency will ensure that professional and paraprofessional personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and 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.

The Agency provides rehabilitation and independent living services in a State with a large population of persons for whom Spanish is a primary language, and with a significant population of individuals who speak a variety of native languages. The Agency has staff persons who can communicate in some of these languages, and hires interpreters when that is not readily feasible, including a phone-based interpreter service that supports over 150 languages. The Agency has can deliver Braille materials as requested to any consumers throughout New Mexico. Further, the Agency regularly reproduces material on portable media when requested. All Agency word processing software programs can produce text in large print. The Agency also regularly contracts with sign language interpreters whenever there is a need for a sign language interpreter. The agency has experimented with remote video interpreting so as to more effectively serve deafblind consumers who require sign language support. This is especially effective in rural areas where it is difficult to schedule human interpreters.

Newly hired Agency personnel who work directly with consumers participate in up to two months of intensive training in the skills of blindness at the Commission's Orientation Center, where two of the classes in the curriculum (Braille and Communications) deal with modes of communication utilized by individuals who are blind.

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.

The Commission coordinates with the State Educational Agency to coordinate the personnel development system under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act with the agency's comprehensive system of personnel development. On January 28, 2020, the agency entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Public Education Department. The Public Education Department is the State Educational Agency in New Mexico. The Commission regularly attends and presents at transition conferences that are sponsored by the Public Education Department, and the MOA will further this coordination. When appropriate, joint training will be undertaken between the Commission and the Public Education Department to

further the coordination of personnel development. The Commission also has an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Central Region Educational Cooperative. The Central Region Educational Cooperative is a program within the Public Education Department, and the IGA provides for instruction and training to be provided to Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired who are located within Local Educational Agencies. The Commission has also worked directly with Local Educational Agencies to provide instruction to Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired. This instruction has included training in Unified English Braille (UEB), and the agency has sponsored numerous UEB seminars and NCUEB certification exams. The agency has also provided in-service training on the use of blindness-related assistive technology to Local Educational Agencies and presented at transition conferences sponsored by both Local Educational Agencies and the Public Education Department. The agency also has a Governmental Services Agreement with the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired that provides for instruction and training to be provided to Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired who are located within Local Educational Agencies. The agency will continue to coordinate these types of training activities. The Commission's State Rehabilitation Council also had an opportunity to review and provide input and comments in the development of the CSPD Plan. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Public Education Department requires that the Public Education Department designate at least one representative to serve on the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council. This representation on the Council will help the agency and the Public Education Department to further enhance the coordination of the personnel development system under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act with the agency's comprehensive system of personnel development.

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 Commission has put in place plans, policies, and procedures to enable the agency to coordinate with educational officials, and to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services.

On April 20, 2021, the Governor appointed the state's Director of Special Education to serve on the Commission for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The service of the Special Education Director on the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council helped the Commission to coordinate transition services with the Public Education Department (PED) and also with Local Educational Agencies. She resigned from her position with PED in July 2023, although she has agreed to remain on the agency's SRC. The Commission will be seeking another formal representative on the SRC from PED.

The agency signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) on January 28, 2020, and the agreement will remain in effect

until terminated or replaced. The purpose of the Memorandum of Agreement (Agreement) is to establish a Formal interagency agreement as required by 34 CFR 361.22(e). The Agreement provides for methods of coordination between the agency and PED to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services, including pre-employment transition services, in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the agency. These methods of coordination also facilitate the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment as early as possible during the transition planning process, but not later than the time a student with a visual impairment is determined to be eligible for the Commission's vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting. The Commission for the Blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have agreed to make pre-employment transition services available to all students with disabilities who are potentially eligible or eligible for VR services in New Mexico starting at 14 years of age, or earlier as needed, based on the IDEA definition of a "student with a disability."

The Commission has established relationships with Local Educational Agencies, including formally signed cooperative agreements with school districts and other educational agencies. The purpose is to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational and Pre-Employment Transition Services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission. The Commission has signed agreements with Aztec Municipal School District; Bloomfield School District; Carlsbad Municipal Schools; Cloudcroft Municipal Schools; Clovis Municipal School District; Deming Public School District; Española Public School District; Farmington Municipal Schools; Gadsden School District; Gallup-McKinley County Schools; Las Cruces Public Schools; Los Lunas School District; Moriarty-Edgewood School District; Pecos Public Schools; Portales Municipal School District; Roswell Independent School District; and Taos Municipal Schools. These agreements were signed by the agency's Executive Director in meetings with the Special Education Directors or superintendents of each school district. The Commission is actively working to update these existing agreements, and the agency is also actively working to obtain cooperative agreements with additional school districts. In addition, the agency has a cooperative agreement with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The agency signed a Governmental Services Agreement (GSA) with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) in May of 2021. Under this GSA, the agency funds the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services that are provided by NMSBVI. The purpose is to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational and Pre-Employment Transition Services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission.

The agency has also entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the New Mexico Central Region Educational cooperative. The purpose of the IGA is to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational and Pre-Employment Transition Services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission.

The Commission has assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to serve as the agency Transition Coordinator. The Transition Coordinator is supervised by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager. Together, they coordinate with educational officials on the transition of students. The Transition Coordinator works out of the Albuquerque

office, and has a caseload dedicated to transition students who are in Albuquerque and the surrounding Counties. The Commission also has Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in Santa Fe, Farmington, Las Cruces, and Roswell, and these Counselors serve the transition students residing in these communities and surrounding areas. These counselors are under the supervision of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager, and they also coordinate with educational officials on the transition of students.

The Commission administers the Technology for Children program, which is managed by the Skills Center Coordinator. The Technology for Children program provides assistive technology to blind and visually impaired students for use in their homes. The program is in its 18th year, and the assistive technology is funded by the Department of Health. The program works closely with Teachers of the Visually Impaired and helps to build relationships with these teachers and their local educational agencies. The program also identifies students who might be eligible for Commission transition services and facilitates the early participation of the Commission in Individualized Education Program meetings.

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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 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.

(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;

The agency has a signed Formal interagency agreement with the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) as required by 34 CFR 361.22(e). The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed on January 28, 2020. The MOA is valid until terminated or replaced. The MOA provides for methods of coordination between the Commission and PED to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services, including pre-employment transition services, in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the agency. The methods of coordination facilitate the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment as early as possible during the transition planning process, but not later than the time a student with a visual impairment is determined to be eligible for the Commission's vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting.

The MOA requires that the Commission coordinate with educational agencies to ensure that services are not duplicated, and that services provided by the Commission do not supplant existing educational agency services. According to the MOA, the Commission shall provide consultation and technical assistance to help PED plan for the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from school to post-school activities, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and other vocational rehabilitation services. The Commission also provides consultation and technical assistance to help local educational agencies, charter schools, the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf. The purpose of the consultation and technical assistance is to help these educational agencies plan for the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from school to post-school activities, including Pre-ETS 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;

As set forth in the MOA, the Commission recognizes the importance of facilitating the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from the receipt of educational services to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission. Consequently, the Commission will participate in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings of eligible students referred to the Commission as soon as possible. The Commission will participate in IEP

meetings for students starting at the age of 14, and even younger when circumstances make such participation appropriate. This IEP participation may take place in person, or by conference or video call. The information shared during the IEP shall include a description of the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible students who are blind or visually impaired.

The Commission, in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Health, provides assistive technology devices for home use to eligible children who are blind or visually impaired to increase capacity and ability to provide Pre-ETS services by building relationships with families, teachers, and school districts, and identifying students who are potentially eligible to receive and can benefit from services from the Commission.

(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;

As set forth in the MOA with the Public Education Department, the Commission shall coordinate with educational agencies to provide the five required Pre-ETS services set forth at 34 CFR 361.48(a)(2) to eligible blind and visually impaired students. The Commission shall also carry out the four coordination activities set forth at 34 CFR 361.48(a)(4). The Commission shall engage in annual forecasting to determine if it has sufficient funds and resources to provide the five required Pre-ETS services. Should the Commission determine that it has sufficient funds and resources to provide all of the five required Pre-ETS services, the Commission shall provide the nine authorized services set forth at 34 CFR 361.48(a)(3). The Pre-ETS services to be provided by the Commission include the Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP), which provides students who are blind or visually impaired with paid work-based learning experiences.

As set forth in the MOA with the Public Education Department, personnel from educational agencies shall provide transition planning for students who are blind or visually impaired that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Consistent with its obligations under state and federal law, personnel from PED shall also provide guidance and direction on transition planning to educational agencies for students who are blind or visually impaired that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This shall include methods for the identification of students who may be eligible for Commission services, and methods for making referrals of such students to the Commission.

PED shall designate at least one representative to serve on the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council pursuant to 34 CFR 361.17(b)(3), and as specified at 34 CFR 361.17(b)(1).

PED shall establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities pursuant to

34 CFR 300.167. When making panel membership recommendations, PED shall consider representatives with knowledge of and experience in the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services, including Pre-ETS Services provided to students who are blind or visually impaired.

(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;

As set forth in the MOA with the Public Education Department, the Commission maintains a Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager, a Transition Coordinator, a Skills Center Coordinator, and vocational rehabilitation counselors and other staff necessary for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services. All of these positions are currently filled, and all of the employees regularly engage in outreach and coordination activities. The Transition Coordinator and Skills Center coordinator routinely present to statewide transition conferences, district special education fairs, and parent meetings. This coordination and outreach has resulted in 47 students being registered for the 2024 Students in Transition to Employment Program, which is a significant increase from prior years.

PED may include the Commission in transition conferences and such other activities that might further outreach to students who are blind or visually impaired.

The Commission also has an agreement with the New Mexico Central Region Educational Cooperative to provide Pre-ETS services to students who are blind or visually impaired. This agreement was renewed on November 6, 2023. The Commission has an agreement with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Pre-ETS services to students who are blind or visually impaired. This agreement was renewed on January 11, 2023. The Commission will maintain these agreements as appropriate and to the extent that sufficient funding is available.

(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

The Commission shall maintain documentation of its compliance with Section 511 for students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment, including documentation showing that all required Section 511 counseling has been provided.

(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.

Pursuant to 34 CFR 397.31, neither the PED nor any local educational agency in New Mexico 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 a 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.

Historically, the commission has focused exclusively on competitive integrated employment and self-employment. As a result, the Commission has developed effective employer relationships and placement methods that serve adults, students with disabilities, and youth with the most significant disabilities.

Placements

On-the-job training experiences are an effective approach that can result in permanent job placement. This method also helps to overcome doubts that employers have about employing persons with blindness or visual impairments. Summer jobs serve the dual purpose of overcoming employer doubts while at the same time providing youth with valuable work experience. Successful efforts at job retention for longtime employees losing their vision also help to show employers that, with proper blindness skills, work methods, and technology, can perform work effectively and productively.

Employers

The Commission has relationships with a wide variety of employers across New Mexico. Employers cover the landscape of federal government, state, county, and municipal governments; post-secondary educational institutions; public, charter, and private secondary schools; private non-profit businesses; and private for-profit businesses of all sizes and types.

The Commission will utilize existing relationships and develop new relationships in order to create employment opportunities and work experience opportunities for adults in competitive integrated settings and self-employment.

In an effort to increase employment and work experience opportunities in competitive integrated settings, the Commission will reach out to federal contractors. The new rules in Section 503 of the Rehab Act introduces a utilization goal for federal contractors and subcontractors that 7 percent of each job group in their workforce be qualified individuals with disabilities. This is an area of opportunity that has not been fully utilized by the Commission.

The Commission will also partner with business development specialist in one-stop work centers across the state to connect the Commission with employers in those service territories.

Such partnerships will serve to improve OJT and permanent placement opportunities for job-ready Commission adults.

The Commission will also assist consumers interested in self-employment to take advantage of provisions of the New Mexico State Use Act. The New Mexico State Use Act, 13-1C-1 NMSA 1978, is an outgrowth of the state's continuing efforts to expand opportunities for its citizens with disabilities. The Act opens state service contracts, including contracts to provide service to the state as business owners and entrepreneurs, to persons with disabilities without their having to competitively bid for the contract -- so long as the services are provided at fair market pricing.

Again, although the Commission has encouraged self-employment, it can do a better job assisting its self-employed consumers to take full advantage of opportunities afforded by the State Use Act. The Commission will partner with Horizons of New Mexico, the program's agent, to facilitate additional opportunities for self-employed consumers. The Commission's executive director serves on the State Use Council.

Additionally, the commission will help small business owners and those individuals interested in self-employment to obtain 8(a) certification, which will enable those businesses to compete for set-aside contracts with the federal government that are designated for socially and economically disadvantaged businesses.

The Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP) will continue with its efforts to provide work experience and skills training to blind students with disabilities during the summer months. STEP continues to provide outreach to recruit students with the most significant disabilities, including students from minority backgrounds, and students who are also unserved or underserved. The STEP program is also operated on a residential basis in Alamogordo, which allows students from even the most economically disadvantaged and rural portions of the state to participate. STEP students are paid during the employment portion of the program. In addition to providing essential job training and experience, this also has the benefit of serving as a significant incentive for many students from economically disadvantaged families, enabling the Commission to reach and attract more individuals into the program. In addition to the residential program in Alamogordo, STEP offers a commuter program that serves students with disabilities within the Albuquerque metropolitan area, and also offers community placements statewide.

The goal of the STEP Program is to give participating students more exposure to the workplace, enabling them to gain a better appreciation of the real-world expectations of employers, to enable them to gain a better understanding of their career options, and to acquire the job skills that will help them to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming employed. The STEP program does this through paid job experience. Job placement will be done based upon availability of work sites and the student's career interests and ability. Students will be paid for up to 25 hours a week at the Santa Fe Living wage rate, (\$14.60 in summer 2024) rather than the New Mexico Minimum Wage Rate of \$12.00 per hour in 2024.

Alamogordo and Albuquerque students will also receive training designed to enhance their employment skills. An emphasis will be placed upon the development of "soft" work skills such as dressing appropriately for the job site, communication with coworkers and supervisors, timeliness and reliability, and the importance of a positive attitude. STEP students will also receive training in how to use popular computer applications such as Word and Edge by using

assistive technology such as JAWS. Students will also have an opportunity to acquire greater literacy by using Braille. Because the ability to travel independently is essential for successful employment, students will be taught Orientation and Mobility (cane travel).

Students will be taught other essential skills, including how to identify different currency denominations, how to label their clothes and dress appropriately for different job situations, how to shop for groceries, and how to prepare basic meals.

Community-based participants will also receive customized training to serve their individual needs. Summer employment is a common experience for adults in the workplace. When it comes to the employment of blind and visually impaired youth, it can be a valuable experience for both the employer and the youth. Although we rarely find blind and visually impaired youth who are interested in working during the school year, many of them are interested in working during the summer. The Commission can easily fund summer employment opportunities for any youth who were interested with Pre-ETS funds, but the Commission will make a greater effort to encourage more youth to take advantage of summer employment opportunities in the future. The Commission will support 40 students in summer employment during Summer 2024.

During PY 2022 and PY 2023, the Commission created a variety of opportunities for students with disabilities to explore interesting careers. Sessions focused on the following:

Multiple presentations on basic scientific terminology, the scientific method, chemical reactions, accessible equipment for scientists, and careers in the physical sciences. New Mexico is home to Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratories, so science is a major part of the New Mexico economy.

- * A six-part program on careers in music and entertainment;

- * Presentation on careers in finance;

- * Presentation on the Business Enterprise Program;

- * Presentation on voice acting;

- * Presentation on careers in forensic science.

- * Presentation on careers in science-based mystery novels or movie scripts. New Mexico has a very vibrant film industry. Netflix is planning a \$1 billion expansion of its existing studio complex to include an additional 300 acres and a significant expansion of its production capability. NBC Universal also has a large post-production facility in Albuquerque.

One program on career exploration that the Commission is planning for Summer 2024 is called the Advocacy Academy, focusing on careers in becoming an advocate. These might include legal, special education, Social Security, social work, college disabled student services, and peer mentors. This six-part series will begin in June 2024 and wrap-up in September 2024.

The Commission will use existing employer relationships and develop new employer relationships to facilitate work opportunities for students who do wish to take advantage of work opportunities after school or on weekends when school is in session. As part of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the New Mexico Central Region Educational Cooperative (CREC), CREC staff will provide job development services to create work-based learning opportunities for STEP consumers.

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 agency has a working relationship with the Governor's Commission on Disability as set forth at 34 CFR 361.24(h), and has in place a memorandum of Understanding with the Governor's Commission on Disability, which is the agency that administers the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program Coordinating Council (NMTAP). A member of the Commission's Skills Center staff serves on NMTAP. The staff member regularly attends and participates in NMTAP events and meetings, and the Skills Center Coordinator and Assistive Technology Manager have presented at NMTAP technology conferences. Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors regularly attend the NMTAP's annual Assistive Technology Conference to become familiar with emerging technologies that can be used to serve agency consumers.

NMTAP offers free services to New Mexicans with disabilities to attain assistive technology services. It is a statewide program designed to increase knowledge of, access to, and acquisition of assistive or adaptive technology for anyone with any disability, anywhere in the state, of any age. NMTAP's services include a library of over 1,800 loanable devices, financial loans to purchase assistive technology, and hands-on demonstrations and trainings of assistive technology devices. Through community partnerships, NMTAP also provides device reutilization services for items such as computers or durable medical equipment that involves refurbishing lightly used and relevant equipment to be redistributed affordably to those with disabilities for work, education, or community engagement.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

While the Commission was unable to develop an active partnership with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture, which was largely due to the exigencies of the pandemic, the Commission will seek to develop such partnerships during the pendency of this State Plan. Regarding the usage of the services and facilities of programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development, this is an area of very minimal or non-existent usage due to the nature of employment opportunities typically sought by persons who are blind or visually impaired.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

The Commission works cooperatively with a variety of agencies and programs to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings for youth who are not in

school. This includes the National Federation of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico. The Commission also works with the Colorado Center for the Blind and the Louisiana Center for the Blind, which are training centers operated by the National Federation of the Blind. In addition, the Commission regularly works with entities such as Helen Keller National Center and also World Services for the Blind. The Commission also works with the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities, and its Central nonprofit agency Horizons of New Mexico. The state use program in New Mexico is one of two state use programs in the nation that provide for individuals with disabilities to receive state contracts, leading to community-based employment in integrated settings.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

The Commission works very closely with the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings for persons who are blind or visually impaired. The Council is the state use contracting entity in New Mexico. The Commission's executive director is the Secretary of the Council, and he has a leadership role in helping the Council to formulate and expand state use programs in New Mexico. The Council meets at the Commission's Skills Center in Albuquerque. The Council's meetings are open to the public, including through Zoom. One of the Council's current initiatives is to expand employment opportunities through temporary employment. The director of the Central Nonprofit Agency (Horizons of New Mexico) has made presentations to the vocational rehabilitation counselor team on several occasions about employment through the state use program and will continue to do so during the pendency of the State Plan.

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 agency has negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD). The MOA complies with the provisions of 34 CFR 361.24(f), which requires the agency and HSD to enter into a formal cooperative agreement. The MOA between the agency and HSD describes how the agency will collaborate, including through the provision of information by the agency to consumers receiving or eligible to receive Medicaid (known in New Mexico as Centennial Care). The Commission surveys all consumers to make sure that all eligible consumers are participating in Centennial Care and providing consumers with benefits counseling and guidance related to work incentives. The goal of the benefits counseling and guidance is to provide consumers with the Medicaid benefits and other supports needed to enable such consumers to more successfully participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program, ultimately increasing the likelihood that the consumer will attain economic self-sufficiency and be able to decrease or eliminate reliance on Medicaid and other public benefits. This includes counseling consumers to apply for the Section 1619(b) program when consumers may lose Supplemental Security Income (SSI) due to work activity, and to encourage consumers to apply for the Working Disabled Individual Category program when the consumer's income is too high to qualify for the 1619(b) program. Of special note is that it was the Commission that came up with the idea of using the Working Disabled Individual category to address the serious problem of the 24-month Medicare waiting period. Many Medicaid recipients lose SSI due to the start of Social Security Disability Insurance or Disabled Adult Child benefits, and thereby also lose Medicaid. The Commission worked with HSD to develop the Medi-Gap portion of the Working Disabled Individual Category, which

provides Medicaid to persons who have lost SSI due to the start of SSDI. The Commission also works to make sure that consumers who lose SSI due to the start of Disabled Adult Child benefits maintain Medicaid under Public Law 99-643. In addition, the agency works to make sure that consumers who may be eligible for Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMB) Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiaries (SLIMB) or Qualified Individuals (QIS) are receiving QMB, SLIMB, or QIS. The Commission also provides consumers with benefits counseling and guidance on SSI, including Work Incentives such as the deduction of Blind Work Expenses and the Student Earned Income Exclusion. The Commission also provides consumers with benefits counseling and guidance on SSI resource rules and the potential benefits of ABLE accounts.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

The agency has negotiated and signed a formal cooperative agreement with the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) that complies with the provisions of 34 CFR 361.24(f). The Memorandum of Agreement describes how the agency will collaborate, including through the provision of information by the agency to consumers receiving or eligible to receive the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The Commission surveys all consumers to make sure eligible consumers are participating in the Developmental Disabilities Waiver, and agency employees provide information about the Developmental Disabilities Waiver to parents and guardians during Individualized Education Plan meetings. The goal is to encourage families to apply for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver sufficiently in advance so as to avoid a gap in supports when the student ages out of special education services. New Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provisions will now enable the agency to provide supported employment for up to 24 months and to provide up to 48 months of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. The agency also administers the Commission's Technology for Children Program in partnership with DOH. The program provides assistive technology devices to children who are blind or visually impaired, including blind or visually impaired children who may be eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The ultimate goal of such benefits counseling and guidance is to provide consumers with the supports needed to enable such consumers to more successfully participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

The agency has negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD). The MOA complies with the provisions of 34 CFR 361.24(f), which requires the agency and HSD to enter into a formal cooperative agreement. The Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) is located within HSD, and BHSD is the Mental Health and Substance Abuse State Authority for New Mexico. The MOA describes how the agencies will collaborate, including in the provision of behavioral health services to persons who are blind or visually impaired. The goal of the MOA is to provide consumers with the supports needed to enable those consumers to more successfully participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program, ultimately increasing the likelihood that the consumer will attain economic self-sufficiency.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

The agency has established cooperative relationships with a number of different state agencies, including the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Public Education Department, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Governor's Commission on Disability, the Human Services Department, The New Mexico Department of Health, and the New Mexico Department of Justice.

The Commission has a signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that complies with 34 CFR 361.24(e). The MOU between the agency and DVR provides for reciprocal referral services, use of each other's services and facilities, joint planning activities to improve services for individuals with multiple impairments, and otherwise cooperate to provide more effective services. The Department of Health (DOH) administers the Developmental Disabilities Support Division, and the agency has negotiated a written cooperative agreement with DOH that complies with 34 CFR 361.24(f). The agency and DOH have worked cooperatively to fund the Commission's Technology for Children program. The Human Services Department (HSD) is the state agency in New Mexico that administers Medicaid under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, and the agency has negotiated a formal cooperative agreement with HSD in compliance with 34 CFR 361.24(f).

The Commission works cooperatively with the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs located in New Mexico. The agency has a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services. The Director of the Navajo OSERS program is a member of the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and reports to the SRC on behalf of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The Commission has also established cooperative relationships with Laguna-Acoma Connections and Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation. The agency has a signed Memorandum of Agreement with Laguna—Acoma Connections and has a signed Memorandum of Agreement with Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation. The written cooperative agreements describe strategies for collaboration and coordination in providing vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The agency has developed working relationships and coordinates its activities with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). The Deputy Director for Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation is a member of the SILC, while the agency Executive Director and Independent Living Program Manager regularly attend SILC meetings. A representative of the SILC serves on the Commission's SRC and makes SILC reports at each SRC meeting. The agency also works cooperatively with the Centers for Independent Living.

The agency works with community rehabilitation programs, including Adelante Development Center; TRESCO; Zuni Entrepreneurial Enterprises; Tobosa Developmental Services; and Taos County ARC. This cooperation includes activities undertaken as a part of the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities, of which the Executive Director is a member.

The Commission works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to support veterans with blindness and visual impairments to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment. Generally, the VA purchases technology and other equipment and the Commission provides

education and training support, enabling each organization to leverage its strengths in order to serve the needs of veterans. The agency works with other agencies, including the Helen Keller National Center, Albuquerque Center for Hope and Recovery, Best Buddies International, and Small Business Development Centers located throughout New Mexico.

The agency has participated on the Ticket to Work Partners group, along with the Social Security Administration, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and a number of employment networks that serve ticket holders throughout New Mexico. Relationships with these organizations run the gamut, including referrals, vocational evaluations, job development, job coaching, transportation, consulting, case management, joint case servicing, deaf blind services, supported employment services, and self-employment services.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

The Agency works with the following non-profit rehabilitation services providers:

Zuni Entrepreneurial Enterprises, Inc.; New Vistas Center for Independent Living; TRESKO; Tobosa Developmental Services; Best Buddies; and the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities, through Horizons of New Mexico, their central non-profit agency.

The agency also maintains cooperative partnerships with the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state, and coordinates services through the Statewide Independent Living Council. The Agency has actively worked to expand ties with the IL centers and work with the SILC, in an effort to increase staff and consumer awareness of their activities. A SILC representative serves on the Agency's Statewide Rehabilitation Council, and as such, keeps each respective Council up to date on their respective activities. The Commission's Deputy Director for Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation has also been appointed to the SILC.

The manner in which these agreements are established comes from several methods. The agency receives input directly from consumers and service providers, either through telephone contact or written referrals and requests. Input is received from Public Hearings, the State Rehabilitation Council, the SILC, and the joint planning ventures with various service providers. Needs assessments studies, consumer surveys, and cooperative meetings are also conducted to gather data and information with respect to establishing cooperative agreements. Cooperative agreements typically do not involve any monetary exchange between the agencies. The staff of each agency agrees to cooperate with each other, and reciprocate in referring consumers for services as appropriate.

The Commission is proud of its relationship with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). The NFB is the largest organization of blind persons in the United States. The Agency incorporated NFB Newsline as a part of its overall Newsline services in FY 2002, and intends to continue NFB Newsline in PY 2024-2027.

Newsline is an important part of the Commission's outreach program to identify and serve most significantly disabled persons who are minorities, and individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation or supported employment program. Newsline provides access to state and national publications to individuals in all portions of New Mexico, including in the most rural portions of the state. The local Newsline and NFB-Newsline have publications that include newspapers from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Farmington,

Gallup, Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Deming, Las Cruces, and Roswell; and recently began offering the Navajo Times. Newslane also has a Spanish language news category. NFB-Newslane offers prompts in Spanish and has several Spanish language publications. NFB-Newslane voices can also be customized to meet the needs of individuals who are hard of hearing, and NFB-Newslane offers the ability to download publications for reading on a Braille display. This feature enables individuals who are deaf-blind to access the entire selection of more than 400 national newspapers and magazines. NFB-Newslane also offers a job search feature that enables job seekers to create custom searches of both the CareerBuilder and USA Jobs databases.

The Commission works closely with the New Mexico affiliate of the NFB as well. The NFBNM has opened its annual state convention agenda to enable the Commission to make reports on its programs and services and to hold public hearings in order to gather comments on the state plan, strategic plan, and agency services. The NFBNM has membership on the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council, representing blind consumers. During prior years, the NFBNM and Commission co-sponsored employer awards to worthy organizations, recognizing the award-winning organizations at the NFBNM's state convention banquet. The Commission has also had a strong relationship with the American Council of the Blind, another prominent organization of individuals who are blind. As with the NFBNM, the New Mexico affiliate of the ACB has opened its state convention agenda to enable the Commission to make reports and hold public hearings to gather comments on the state plan, strategic plan, and agency services. Representatives of the ACBNM have also served on the Commission's State Rehabilitation Council, although the ACBNM has been only minimally active in the past few years.

In the past, the Agency has worked with the nonprofit organizations listed below for the provision of coordinated supported employment services to consumers who qualify for supported employment. Under the new supported employment provisions of WIOA, the Commission will be able to cover the cost of extended services for up to four years for youth with the most significant disabilities, or until the individuals reach the age of 25 and no longer meet the definition of a "youth with a disability", whichever comes first. Supported employment services begin after job placement. Vocational rehabilitation services such as assessment, job development and job placement are paid for with Title I funds. Although vocational rehabilitation services may be included in agreements/contracts along with supported employment services, Title VI funds are not used to procure VR services, since supported employment services begin at the time of job placement. The Commission will work with the providers listed below to expand the nature of Commission-funded extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services may be provided to consumers after successful case closure in order to maintain job stability. These services may include specialized tools and supplies, specialized training, and costs of needed services not otherwise available from long-term funding sources.

1. New Vistas Supported Employment Services, 2890 Trades West Road, Santa Fe, NM. Services included job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain stability on the job, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The population served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

2. Tobosa Developmental Services, 1219 West Summit, Roswell, NM, 88201 Tobosa Developmental Services provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training, and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain job stability, the facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The populations served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

3. Zia Therapy Center Inc., 900 W. 1st, Alamogordo, NM. Zia Therapy provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support in order for the consumer to achieve and maintain job stability, the facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. The populations served under this agreement included individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

4. Center for Function & Creativity, 223 Montano Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107, Provided job assessment, job development and placement, on-the-job intensive skills training, other training and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

5. Mandy's Farm, 7511 4th Street NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107, (505) 503-1141, Provided job assessment, job development and placement, on the-job intensive skills training, other training and support required to achieve and maintain job stability, facilitation of socialization and communication with coworkers, and assistance with transportation arrangements. Individuals served under this agreement are those who meet the eligibility requirements of the Commission's supported employment program.

Similar programs in other New Mexico communities will be contacted, as appropriate, to determine their capacity to participate in collaborative efforts regarding the Commission's supported employment program.

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 VR agency must select the "Edit" button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.

The State Plan must 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.
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 CFR 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:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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).
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.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.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.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
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.
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 as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.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:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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 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.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.
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.
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 sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
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.

The State Plan must include
4.j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State:
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.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
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.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:
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.
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.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
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 Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) 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.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

The State Plan must include
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.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 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.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) 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[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

New Mexico Commission for the Blind

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 (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] 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[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], 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;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] 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.

[4] 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 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

New Mexico Commission for the Blind

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[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], 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;

[5] 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.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

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);

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

Greg D. Trapp

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

Executive Director

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.

[1] PUBLIC LAW 113-128. [2] ALL REFERENCES IN THIS PLAN TO "DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY" OR TO "THE STATE AGENCY" RELATE TO THE AGENCY IDENTIFIED IN THIS PARAGRAPH. [3] 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. [4] 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 C.F.R. PART 361. [5] 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. [6] APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, IN PART, INCLUDE THE CITATIONS IN FOOTNOTE 4, AS WELL AS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM REGULATIONS AT 34 C.F.R. PART 363.

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] 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.

[4] 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 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] 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.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the “Edit” button.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Greg D. Trapp
Title of Signatory	Executive Director
Date Signed	02/28/2024

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	43.0	43.0	44.0	44.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.5	41.5	41.0	42.5
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4808.0	5080.0	4900.0	5120.0
Credential Attainment Rate	38.1	39.1	38.5	40.0
Measurable Skill Gains	49.4	53.4	50.0	53.9
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.

- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The mission of the Commission is to "enable persons who are blind to achieve vocational, economic, and social equality by providing career preparation, training in the skills of blindness, and above all, promoting and conveying the belief that blindness is not a barrier to successful employment or to living an independent and meaningful life." To accomplish this mission the Commission provides the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals residing in the state and has in place practices and policies to ensure equitable access and participation in the program.

The Commission takes "affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions" as stated in section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, and as required by 34 CFR 361.18 and 361.19. As a result, a majority of the Commission employees who provide direct counseling or teaching services to consumers are individuals who are blind or visually impaired, or who have other disabilities. Likewise, a majority of the Commission managers and supervisors are also individuals who are blind or visually impaired, or who have other disabilities. These employees represent a diverse range of backgrounds, including with respect to ethnicity, nationality, language, sexual orientation, and gender diversity. This full staffing and diversity enable the Commission to better and more appropriately meet the needs of all consumers in a way that is linguistically appropriate, sensitive, and culturally competent.

The Commission currently has all eight of its vocational rehabilitation counselor positions filled. The counselors are strategically located throughout the state so as to reach areas of the state that have traditionally been unserved or underserved. The Assistive Technology Unit is also fully staffed, and the unit's four employees are also located so as to maximize the effective delivery of services. The Orientation Center in Alamogordo and the Skills Center in Albuquerque each have only one vacancy and are able to fully serve all the Commission consumers.

The Commission ensures access to the Commission programs and services as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and as required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This includes compliance with the effective communication requirements of the ADA. Consequently, the Commission documents, such as the Rights and Responsibilities and the Manual of Operating Procedures are provided in alternate accessible formats.

The Commission's Orientation Center is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and was reaccredited in FFY 23. The CARF standards include a review of ADA accessibility.

The Commission Newsline for the Blind program is also a vital part of the Commission process of ensuring equitable access and participation in the Commission services and programs. The newspapers that are provided through Newsline include the Navajo Times and Spanish language news, as well as publications from rural portions of the state. Newsline also provides access to the State Plan, SRC Annual Report, SRC meeting notices, Commission board meeting notices, and notices of public meetings.

The Commission also recognizes the critical importance of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and the essential role that the SRC serves in guiding the Commission to ensure the effective delivery of services to eligible individuals with disabilities. Consequently, the Commission ensures that the SRC meetings are accessible as set forth under 34 CFR 361.17(J)(1). This includes conducting SRC meetings in a way that allows for both virtual and

in-person public participation. The Commission also actively works to ensure a diverse SRC membership, including with respect to racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, disability, and gender diversity. The Commission and SRC have jointly developed an SRC Resource Plan pursuant to 34 CFR 361.17(i). The SRC Resource Plan was adopted on April 6, 2023, and is designed to ensure that the SRC is able to appropriately represent the diversity of New Mexico.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER
BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

New Mexico is a rural state that has one of the highest rates of poverty in the nation, with a poverty level in 2022 that was 58 percent higher than the national average. New Mexico also ranks last in the nation for overall child well-being, ranking 49th for education and 49th for economic well-being. Rankings also show that 24% of children in New Mexico are living in poverty. In addition, 44% of children in New Mexico live in a single parent household, compared to a national average of only 29.9%. The specific social determinants of health barriers include high rates of unemployment, high rates of diabetes, high rates of secondary disabilities, high rates of substance abuse, high rates of teen substance abuse, and a high rate of teen births. New Mexico also has a shortage of qualified teachers, and especially qualified teachers of the blind and visually impaired.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH
BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR
ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

The Commission will continue to work to ensure that the agency and the workplace are an inclusive and welcoming environment for consumers and employees, including as set forth under 34 CFR 361.18 and 361.19. The Commission will also continue to fully implement the state's multilingual pay differential that enables additional compensation for employees who use their multilingual skills in the performance of their jobs. At present, 21 of the Commission's 77 employees receive multilingual compensation, meaning that slightly over 27% of the Commission employees possess multilingual skills and actually use those skills in the course of their employment.

The Commission will continue to monitor budget and staffing needs so as to maintain the ability to provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to persons who are blind and residing in the state. The Commission will continue to maximize efforts to spend the entire Commission share of the VR grant award. The Commission will also continue to forecast its ability to provide all of the required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), enabling the Commission to provide the authorized Pre-ETS activities. The Commission will also continue to maximize efforts to spend the entire 15% Pre-ETS reserve.

The Commission relocated the VR counselor and IL teacher from its office in Las Vegas to its administrative office in Santa Fe in FY 23. This was done so as to maximize the proper and efficient delivery of services to Northern New Mexico. The population of San Miguel County (where Las Vegas is located) is only 27,200, whereas the population of Santa Fe County is 154,800. This relocation will enable the VR counselor who is now in Santa Fe and who also speaks Spanish to serve the population of Northern New Mexico in a more efficient and appropriate fashion, a significant portion of whom either speak Spanish as their primary language or are monolingual Spanish speakers.

In FFY 22 and 23, the Commission worked with the New Mexico General Services Department to remodel a restroom facility in the Albuquerque field office to make it into a gender inclusive restroom that was also ADA accessible and that included a changing table. This gender inclusive and ADA accessible restroom is prominently located near the lobby, and the remodeled restroom was opened on May 25, 2023. The remodeled restroom will enable the Commission to more effectively meet the needs of a diverse population of consumers and employees.

The Commission opened an apartment facility that is adjacent to the Orientation Center in Alamogordo on April 6, 2023. The apartment facility is fully ADA accessible and will enable the Orientation Center to more effectively meet the needs of consumers receiving training at the Orientation Center, including the needs of consumers with children and consumers who use wheelchairs.

The Commission maintains all of its policies and procedures in an accessible format, including the Manual of Operating Procedures which is available on the Commission web page. The Commission is currently working to translate the Manual of Operating Procedures into Spanish. The completed translation will be posted on the Commission web page.

The Commission is currently working with the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to ensure appropriate compensation for SRC members for childcare and personal assistance services as set forth in Section 105(g) of the Rehabilitation Act. SRC members are currently compensated for attending meetings pursuant to the provision of the New Mexico Per Diem and Mileage Act. However, the Per Diem and Mileage Act does not include provisions for childcare and personal assistance services. Consequently, the Commission contacted DFA on January 29, 2024, with the request that DFA work with the Commission to develop a way to compensate SRC members as set forth in Section 105(g) of the Rehabilitation Act. This will enable the SRC to "represent as great a diversity of voices from the disability community as possible, including racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and gender diversity, as well as a wide range of physical, intellectual, and mental health disabilities."

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The Commission will continue in an ongoing fashion to ensure that the agency and the workplace are an inclusive and welcoming environment for consumers and employees, including as set forth under 34 CFR 361.18 and 361.19.

The Commission SFY 26 Request Budget will include a request for sufficient revenue for the Commission to continue to provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals who are blind and residing in the state, helping to enable the Commission to meet the needs of consumers who have traditionally been unserved or underserved. The SFY 26 Commission Request Budget is due on September 1, 2024. The Commission will continue to maximize efforts to spend the entire Commission share of the VR grant award and is projecting to expend or incur the entire Commission FFY 24 award on or before September 30, 2025.

The Commission will also continue to maximize efforts to spend the entire 15% Commission Pre-ETS reserve. The Commission will also continue to forecast its ability to provide all of the required Pre-ETS activities, which typically takes place during the August or September SRC meeting. This will enable the Commission to provide the authorized Pre-ETS services. The Commission is also projecting to expend all of its FFY 23 Pre-ETS reserve on or before June of 2024, and is projecting to spend or incur all of the FFY 24 Pre-ETS reserve on or before September 30, 2025. Meeting the Pre-ETS requirement to reserve and spend at least 15% of the VR grant on the provision of Pre-ETS services will help the Commission to meet the needs of

transition students, including students who have traditionally been unserved or underserved, and to address issues related to social determinants of health.

The Commission is in the process of revising its Strategic Plan, which will include strategies for addressing barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the program, including social determinants of health. The Strategic Plan is scheduled for consideration and approval at the April 23 meeting of the Commission for the Blind and will be submitted as a part of the Commission SFY 26 Request Budget that is due on September 1, 2024.

The Commission also projects to modify the SRC Resource Plan during FFY 24 so as to be able to include a specific method or approach to provide compensation for childcare and personal assistance services. The Commission projects to have this accomplished on or before September 30, 2024.

The Commission projects to have the Manual of Operating Procedures Spanish translation accomplished on or before June 30, 2024.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant

status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Not applicable since we are not requesting supported employment funds.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Not applicable since we are not requesting supported employment funds.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Not applicable since we are not requesting supported employment funds.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Not applicable since we are not requesting supported employment funds.

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.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must outline how the State will meet the requirements of section 402 of the Social Security Act including how it will:

(OMB Control Number: 0970-0145)

A. CONDUCT A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO SERVE ALL POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS IN THE STATE (NOT NECESSARILY IN A UNIFORM MANNER) THAT PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES WITH (OR EXPECTING) CHILDREN AND PROVIDES PARENTS WITH JOB PREPARATION, WORK, AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO ENABLE THEM TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM, SPECIFICALLY CASH ASSISTANCE, AND BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(I) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

TANF in the State of New Mexico is referred to as **New Mexico Works Program (NMW)**. NMW will help increase family's income through employment and receipt of child support income to enable and assist parents to participate in employment activities Cash assistance is a support service. The TANF program is funded through a block grant, the State Family Assistance Grant (SFAG). The purpose of the NMW program is to change the culture of welfare, both on the part of the state agency and the recipients so that the focus is on addressing barriers so the participants can successfully complete work activities in order to meet the goal of getting New Mexicans sufficient work. The goals of the NMW program are:

- Develop a program focus and environment that supports self-reliance and personal responsibility.
- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes.

- End family dependence on public benefits by promoting work.
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.
- Increase the number of TANF participants engaged in work activities by increasing engagement in suitable job-readiness programs for participants that are state-defined exempt through limited work participation activities.
- Require the NMW service contractor to secure contracted services that promote work activities.
- Ensure participants engaged in work activity have access to work support services through collaborations with private and public sector entities.
- Foster an environment of self-sufficiency and work participation for clients that are about to be sanctioned.
- Review hardship extensions of participants that are motivated to be self-sufficient and encourage them to fully participate in work activities.

The State of New Mexico HSD applies the purpose of the TANF program by achieving the following objectives.

The Department develops and implements the NMW program, a TANF program designed to provide cash assistance, childcare, and supportive services to New Mexico's needy families to assist them in achieving self-sufficiency. Through the work program, NMW program will:

- Assist participants obtain and keep employment sufficient to sustain and strengthen the family.
- Provide parents with education and training, job preparation and readiness, and work and support services to enable them to obtain and retain employment, which assists them to complete the program.
- Transition participants from cash assistance into the workforce. During this transition, the participant receives transitional services and program features to support employment retention.
- Provide case management assistance and services to participants that focus on addressing and overcoming barriers to participation in work activities.
- Provide a reasonable level and duration of support for those who are not able to transition into employment in the near term.
- Allow NMW assistance and services to be available in all geographic areas of the state.
- Encourage family formation by rule and policy formulation supportive of two-parent families.
- Align certain NMW and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provisions to simplify the programs and to control the program's administrative costs.

- Implement the Family Violence Option under TANF.
- Implement Separate State Programs using Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds.
- Implement the state's statutory Rape Prevention Education plan for law enforcement officers.
- Implement an Out-of-Wedlock Birth Reduction plan for the state.

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) is committed to providing necessary and needed services through the New Mexico Works program with increased focus on virtual and on-line skills training, virtual interviews, securing essential jobs and supporting the entire family. DWS staff coordinate and deliver case management services to support the entire family from where they are, through gaining and maintaining employment to stabilize their family and individual household situation. As families continue to need assistance with transportation, childcare and employment options that provide the resources and income their families need to close their TANF case due to income, DWS offers virtual, telephone and in-person service structures to ensure participants and their families can complete intake and orientation; follow-up and follow-through with community referrals and supports; and gain access to services and the training needed to further their goals for independence and self-sufficiency.

B. REQUIRE A PARENT OR CARETAKER RECEIVING ASSISTANCE TO ENGAGE IN WORK (DEFINED BY THE STATE) ONCE THE STATE DETERMINES THE PARENT OR CARETAKER IS READY TO ENGAGE IN WORK, OR ONCE HE OR SHE HAS RECEIVED 24 MONTHS OF ASSISTANCE, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER, CONSISTENT WITH THE CHILD CARE EXCEPTION AT 407(E)(2) (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(II) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

NMW is designed to help families become self-supporting through work. Work is always the primary focus and goal of participation in all activities. Once the TANF recipient reaches their 24 months of cash assistance whether consecutive or not, they should have gained skills to be able to engage in work. The only exception to a participant being able to engage in employment by the 24th month of assistance is if the Department has identified barriers that prevent them from doing so.

To encourage rapid movement towards the goal of employment, NMW participants are required to meet work program participation standards unless participation is waived or there are barriers that prevent the recipient from completing the full participation standard.

HSD may delegate to or contact with other agencies or entities for the provision of some or all the activities described in this section. These entities include, but are not limited to, the NMDWS public or private non-profit and for-profit organizations.

The NMW provider will coordinate services with WIOA Workforce Boards to increase support services to TANF participants and avoid duplication of services. The provider will ensure that the strategic elements and employment needs of the state are being addressed and inform participants of the needs. As the NMDWS starts to identify the high demand employees and employers, the NMW provider will provide a list of jobs and the training services to explain to the NMW participant. This will help TANF participants be educated and informed about the job positions that are needed around the State. Through these services, the participant may be able to get the training and skills needed to be employed by these high demand jobs. Most of these

trainings can fall under core activities, such as, but not limited to, On-the- Job Trainings, part-time employment, work experience, vocational and education training and can eventually lead to full-time subsidized or unsubsidized employment.

Each NMW participant will be provided an Orientation, which explains the work program and its objectives to the participant. The Orientation must be conducted upon referral, if possible, but no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after an application is approved.

To create the appropriate activity for the NMW participant, the CDS/CC is required to conduct an Assessment to identify the following:

- Level of work readiness
- Skills and aptitudes
- Disabilities
- Personal circumstances
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Any other factors pertaining to the individual's ability to become self-sufficient

Assessments are conducted for three primary purposes:

- To determine a participant's employable skills, education, and work experience in relation to employment and self-sufficiency
- To determine applicable support services needed to assist a participant to become employed and leave TANF; and
- To determine whether limited participation in TANF activities is necessary.

The Assessment is the starting point for designing a service plan to provide participants with assistance and resources needed to alleviate or mitigate barriers for the participant to ultimately become employable and leave TANF. Without an Assessment of the participant's situation, a CC/CDS will be unable to effectively determine the most appropriate placement of the participant in activity.

- All participants are required to develop an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP). Just like the Assessment, this document must be completed within fifteen (15) days of the initial approval of benefits by ISD. If the IRP is not completed within the fifteen (15) days and the participant cannot demonstrate good cause, the non-compliance process should be started.
- The IRP is a personal planning tool, intended to assist the participant in identifying their short term and long term goals while building a path and outlining the steps to achieve those goals. IRP will be specific to the participant's circumstances and will list all support services required for participant to achieve stated goal(s).
- The Work Participation Agreement (WPA) is a contract between the NMW Program and the participant, listing specific activities the participant must accomplish to reach their

goals while participating in the TANF program. Just like the Assessment and IRP, the WPA must be completed within fifteen (15) calendar days benefit approval from ISD. Without good cause, failure to complete and sign the WPA may subject the participant to payment sanctioning according to regulation timeframes. A new WPA must also be submitted no later than five (5) days after the expiration of an existing WPA to ensure continuous engagement.

- The WPA must identify the participant's proposed work activities, list the level of effort for each activity, support services needed to help the participant succeed, any special accommodations and have indication of signed or verbal agreement by the participant.
- The WPA must be updated upon notification by the participant of a change in an activity.
- Verification of participation hours will be provided to the service provider by the participant through submission of time sheets, pay stubs or other approved HSD methods. The time sheet submitted by the participant must coincide with the specifics documented in the WPA. Time sheets must indicate supervision and will be signed by the work site supervisor or other responsible individual.

C. ENSURE THAT PARENTS AND CARETAKERS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE ENGAGE IN WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 407 (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(III) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT). CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIRED STRATEGIC ELEMENTS DISCUSSED IN SECTION II (A)(2) HEREIN, PROVIDE A SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF HOW THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ARE ADDRESSING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES FOR PARENTS OR CARETAKERS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

Core activities are those allowable activities for a participant to meet the standard work participation hours for a single or two parent household to meet participation requirements. Allowable core work activities to be counted toward core/non-core hours (86 or 129 or 215 hours per month of participation) are as follows:

- - Unsubsidized Employment: Full or part-time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program. 8.102.461.11, NMAC
 - Subsidized private sector employment: Employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing a participant. 8.102.461.12, NMAC
 - Subsidized public sector employment: Employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing participant. 8.102.461.13, NMAC
 - On-the-job training (OJT): Training in the public or private sector that is given to a paid employee while he or she is engaged in productive work and that provides knowledge and skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. 8.102.461.14, NMAC

- Job search and job readiness assistance (JS/JR): The act of seeking or obtaining employment, preparation to seek or obtain employment, including life skills training, participating in job search (searching for job openings, applying for jobs and interviewing for positions), parenting classes, money management, short-term substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities for those who are otherwise employable. Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and certified by a qualified medical or mental health professional. 8.102.461.15, NMAC
- Work Experience (WE): An unpaid work activity, that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment. The purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment. This activity must be supervised by an employer, work site sponsor, or other responsible party on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. 8.102.461.16, NMAC
- Community Service (CS): Structured programs in which participants perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service programs must be limited to projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain employment and must be supervised on an ongoing basis; no less frequently than daily. 8.102.461.17, NMAC
- Childcare provider for Community Service Participants: Providing childcare to enable another TANF participant only if the other participant is participating in a community service program. This activity must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. 8.102.461.18, NMAC
- Vocational Training (VT): Accredited educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training to include a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Vocational educational training must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily and may include work-focused general education and language instruction.

D. TAKE SUCH REASONABLE STEPS AS THE STATE DEEMS NECESSARY TO RESTRICT THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE UNDER THE PROGRAM ATTRIBUTABLE TO FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(IV) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

Information collected regarding applicants for and participants of NMW is kept confidential except as otherwise allowed under NMW program regulations. Under certain circumstances, confidential information is released to other agencies or individuals involved in the administration of a state, federal or federally assisted program which provides assistance in cash, in-kind or in services directly to individuals on the basis of need. If the information is used

for establishing eligibility and benefit amount or services, the receiving agency must have standards of confidentiality comparable to those of HSD. The agency or individual must have the actual or implied consent of the applicant or recipient to release the information. Consent is considered implied if a recipient or member of the benefit group has submitted an application to the inquiring agency.

The “WorkPath” system is design specifically for managing TANF clients and their employment service activities. WorkPath replaced a previous proprietary vendor owned database system, TANF Pro. The system was deployed in 2021 and is currently maintained under the NMHSD contracts with Deloitte. The case management database from the legacy system TANF Pro has been provided to HSD and imported into the WorkPath system. NMDWS is also partnering with HSD and Deloitte on creating a new “Workpath” system in Salesforce to allow a steady stream of communication between DWS and HSD.

NMDWS Employment Services system “Workforce Connection Online System” (WCOS) additionally continues to support TANF participants and their employment activities. Previously, these activities were tracked as support service referrals from the vendor, but as these critical services and support procedures are now fully integrated under the NMDWS, these core services are managed, tracked and reportable more efficiently.

NMDWS additionally uses its external reporting tools as a temporary method to meet reporting requirements. The external reporting allows staff to capture needed information to effectively maintain accurate files as well as provide efficient, timely and accurate assistance to NMW program participants. The recent New Mexico multi-agency licensing of Microsoft 365 Teams, SharePoint and related application for multi-agency collaboration of communications, data and One Drive document management are an effective solution for managing and sharing documentation including state policies, procedures and forms. NMDWS uses these systems and tracking tools to manage, monitor and report on Scope of Work and contract performance.

NMDWS additionally employs the services of the State of New Mexico Human Capital Management system “SHARE” for managing the program’s subsidized employment opportunities. This internal solution not only provides for an efficient system for managing employment opportunities, but it also provides for important “end user” experiences which aid the clients in their employment skills development.

All NMDWS IT systems and services are maintained by our NMDWS NMW TANF IT Management Specialists, with back up support from our entire IT team. NMDWS IT staff collaboratively work with NMDWS and NMHSD staff for ensuring the systems align to the specifications defined by both agencies. All requests for access to HSD’s IT system are handled collaboratively with NMDWS management, NMDWS Help Desk, key NMDWS IT support staff and NMHSD for managing the onboarding and access lifecycle of staff. NMHSD has also assisted in ensuring that staff who work outside of an ISD Office have access to all important databases and software by issuing VPNs to TANF Supervisors, Leadership, and any Career Consultant housed outside of an ISD Office. NMDWS continues to follow the requirement that all new staff meet both agencies’ security access training requirements which include signing the NMHSD IT Security Agreement and complete Blackboard security training as part of the onboarding process. All TANF Staff are

required to complete ASPEN User Agreements prior to being issued HSD network access, and all staff are required to complete Security Awareness Training prior to being granted access to WCOS and state email.

ASPEN continues to be the database of record, but we continue to use the existing functionality of WorkPath and experience how its functionality adds to the TANF participants program scope of work experience and performance outcomes.

NMDWS is an active user and stakeholder of the system's operations and change management. NMDWS staff are routinely supporting regularly occurring changes and enhancements. NMDWS additionally encourages NMHSD to prioritize additional WorkPath features which are available but were not deployed as part of the initial WorkPath production version including only the minimum viable products features.

It is NMDWS' priority for enhancements that the implementation of feature upgrades which include the public portal, document uploads, increased integration with ASPEN, TANF specific reporting and increased automation and efficiency will allow for streamlined, integrated elements that reduce data replication; automated referral systems; and improved data collection and reporting. NMDWS has also partnered with NMHSD and Deloitte to upgrade the current Workpath system to include enhanced case management features and real-time reporting, allowing DWS to improve on federal and state reporting requirements and better participant management. These new ASPEN and WorkPath features will allow for increased case management effectiveness through enhancements to reporting capabilities to enhances our service delivery, eliminating data entry duplication and manual reviews for monthly reporting requirements. With updated reporting functions, DWS will be able to track additional data for staff performance, employment retention, and education outcomes. DWS also utilizes the WCOS system which allows participants to create or update a professional resume as well as provides the participant with access to over 100,000 statewide job openings. DWS worksites for Career Link, Wage Subsidy, Work Experience and Community service are tracked within the WCOS system. MOU's are uploaded to the WCOS system once a site is established and are reviewed on a monthly basis for site utilization and expiration. DWS is focused on building additional work sites across New Mexico to provide meaningful activities to participants all across the state.

E. ESTABLISH GOALS AND TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT AND REDUCE OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(V) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

HSD seeks to reduce the ratio of illegitimate births in New Mexico. Of particular importance is the significant rate of pregnancies among the state's teenage population resulting in an excessive number of teens bearing children they are not prepared to care for. The Department anticipates that activities to reduce the illegitimacy ration of the State will be funded through state and/or federal funds and may include funding from the TANF block grant.

To address the State's illegitimacy ratio, HSD, in consultation with the CYFD, the Department of Health (DOH), and PED and other agencies such as schools, and faith-based or community organizations, will seek to develop and implement an educational plan for New Mexico's population and with special emphasis on a teen pregnancy prevention program.

The Department will seek to include all entities in the state that deal with teenage individuals and/or their parents or guardians, including ECECD, CYFD, DOH, PED, DWS, juvenile detention facilities, hospitals, and schools.

Teen prevention program and activities emphasizing abstinence and responsibility may include but are not limited to, posters informing young teens about abstinence and pregnancy prevention, informational brochures and pamphlets distributed statewide and outreach by qualified counselors to children in the public schools. Through these efforts, the Department seeks to reduce the illegitimacy ratio for the State by up to three percent in the time covered by the State Plan.

In correlation with HSD NMDWS utilizes a series of procedures to support teen parents through several different training opportunities such as:

- If the participant is a teen parent, age twenty (20) or younger, who has not yet completed high school or its equivalent, must attend courses to complete high school, with an emphasis on education in a traditional high school setting as a program core activity.
- Additional Education and Training as activities appropriate for NMW Teen Parents also include the following activities:
 - Job skills training directly related to employment
 - Education directly related to employment
 - Vocational Education and Training
 - High School Equivalency (HSE) program/High School
- If a teen parent is the second parent in a household and not married, participation in either point above will be counted to NMW requirements as noncore activity.
- If the second teen parent is married to the head of household, the second parent will be meeting core work participation requirements.
- If two teen parents are married, both parents participating in the points above will be meeting core work participation hours.
- If two teen parents are unmarried, the head of household meeting either point will be meeting core work participation hours; however, the second teen parent will only meet non-core work participation hours in the above activities.

F. CONDUCT A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO REACH STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND RELEVANT COUNSELING SERVICES, THAT PROVIDES EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON THE PROBLEM OF STATUTORY RAPE SO THAT TEENAGE PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS MAY BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE MEN (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VI) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

Victims of Statutory Rape can access county mental health programs, community mental health center or Core Service Agencies for services in 32 counties across New Mexico. A CSA coordinates care and provides the essential services such as counseling services to children,

youth and adults who have a serious mental illness, severe emotional disturbance, or dependence on alcohol or drugs.

Each New Mexico Judicial District also has victim advocates that refer and coordinate services with the Rape Crisis Center where individual and group counseling is provided for the victim, the family members, friends, or anyone affected by the assault.

The New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Program provides education, training, and technical assistance to service providers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, medical practitioners and mental health professionals to reduce sexual abuse and sexual violence for any individual including men.

G. IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NECESSARY TO PREVENT ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE PROVIDED UNDER THE STATE PROGRAM FUNDED UNDER THIS PART THROUGH ANY ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSACTION IN AN AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINE OR POINT-OF-SALE DEVICE LOCATED IN A PLACE DESCRIBED IN SECTION 408(A)(12), INCLUDING A PLAN TO ENSURE THAT RECIPIENTS OF THE ASSISTANCE HAVE ADEQUATE ACCESS TO THEIR CASH ASSISTANCE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VII) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

TANF Maintenance of Effort Funded Services Programs (MOE): As a part of its state general fund appropriations, the New Mexico Legislature has funded programs in agencies other than the New Mexico Human Services Department that are intended to provide support services to eligible low-income families. To participate in these programs, individuals and families must meet the low-income guidelines. Related general funds expended in most of these programs may be claimed as a part of the state's TANF MOE requirement in accordance with federal guidelines. Other low-income programs that are not specific to the definition of support service may also be claimed as MOE. The requirements for application processing, determination and re-determination of eligibility and other similar procedural requirements may vary from program to program. The following funds listed below are state expenditures that are counted towards the state's MOE requirement for eligible families only.

- Participants who fail to meet reporting requirements are subject to reporting sanctions and may be prosecuted for fraud. HSD's Office of Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for fraud and abuse identification and control. Cases are referred to OIG for fraud determination in a variety of ways.
- Referrals are made by Income Support Division staff because of program compliance reviews when payment errors are entirely client caused or when the client refuses to cooperate with the review process. Cases are referred by county office staff because of their interaction with clients and based on an indication that information pertinent to the eligibility determination was withheld by the client.
- OIG may initiate its own investigations when referrals that are made by the public or other agencies who have contact with participants. Once referred, OIG determines appropriate follow-up action through intensive investigation that may result in a determination of criminal intent and prosecution or in pursuit of other restitution activity including tax intercept and immediate collection.

- Criminal prosecution is coordinated with local District Attorneys and/or the state Attorney General. In the case of federal programs, fraud prosecutions may be pursued through the federal court system.
- The Administrative Services Division (ASD) is responsible for the recovery of overpayments. This includes both cash repayments and recoupment from ongoing assistance payments.
- HSD prohibits the use of EBT cards in any liquor store, casino, gambling casino, or gaming establishment; or any retail establishment which provides adult- oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment.
- Replacement of stolen benefits is outlined in the NM HSD TANF State Plan.

H. ENSURE THAT RECIPIENTS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED UNDER THE STATE PROGRAM FUNDED UNDER THIS PART HAVE THE ABILITY TO USE OR WITHDRAW ASSISTANCE WITH MINIMAL FEES OR CHARGES, INCLUDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS ASSISTANCE WITH NO FEE OR CHARGES, AND ARE PROVIDED INFORMATION ON APPLICABLE FEES AND SURCHARGES THAT APPLY TO ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING THE ASSISTANCE, AND THAT SUCH INFORMATION IS MADE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(A)(VIII) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

TANF participants can use the EBT card at a retail, grocery store, or an ATM where you are allowed to get cash back. There is never a fee charged for using cash benefits to buy food or get cash back at a POS device at a retail or grocery store, but there is a transaction fee charge of \$0.50 (plus other possible fees) for a cash withdrawal at an ATM machine. This information is given to clients upon receipt of their EBT card. This information can also be found on the HSD website. EBT cards are accepted at all FNS approved locations, this allows participants that are in rural areas adequate access to cash benefits. If there are benefits, HSD, along with our EBT vendor, will work with participants and assist them in accessing their benefits free or at a low cost.

I. INDICATE WHETHER IT INTENDS TO TREAT FAMILIES MOVING FROM ANOTHER STATE DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER FAMILIES UNDER THE PROGRAM, AND IF SO HOW (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(I) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

The NMW program will complete comprehensive case management service delivery to all eligible New Mexicans who are mandatory recipients of NM TANF funds, as determined by the NM HSD, equally and fairly without discrimination of previous residency.

J. INDICATE WHETHER IT INTENDS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO NON-CITIZENS, AND IF SO INCLUDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE ASSISTANCE (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(II) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

- Enumeration: Individuals must report a social security number (SSN) within 60 days of approval for the cash assistance program.
- Citizenship/Non-Citizen Status: To be included in the NMW benefit group, the benefit group member must have a status to make them eligible for the NMW benefit.

- US Citizens: Individuals born in the United States or born to at least one U.S. parent are eligible on the basis of citizenship.
- Non-citizen nationals: Individuals born in an outlying possession of the U.S. (American Samoa of Swain's Island) on or after the date of the U.S. acquired the possession or a person whose parents are non-citizens nationals (subject to certain residency requirements) are eligible to be included in the benefit group.
- Non-Citizen: Individuals who are not citizens of the United States are eligible for inclusion in the NMW benefit group, with respect to qualified immigrants' status, in accordance with the provisions of Title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.
- A qualified non-citizen means a person:
 - Who is lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
 - Who is granted asylum under section 208 of the INA.
 - Who is admitted to the United States as a refugee under section 207 of the INA.
 - Who is paroled into the United States under section 212 (d)(S) of the I NA for a period of at least a year.
 - Whose deportation is withheld under section 241 (b)(3) of 243 (h) of the INA.
 - Who is granted conditional entry into the United States pursuant to section 203 (a)(7) of the INA as in effect prior to April 1, 1980.
 - Is a Cuban or Haitian entrant as defined in section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980
- Battered or subjected to Extreme Cruelty
 - A qualified non-citizen also includes a non-citizen who has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty by a spouse or parent, a non-citizen who is a parent of a battered child or a non-citizen who is the child of a battered parent. The requisite abuse can also be caused by a member of the family residing in the household if the spouse or parent consented or acquiesced to the battery or cruelty. Such individuals must meet all conditions for treatment of non-citizen who have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty as qualified non-citizen set for at Title 8 U.S.C. 1641(c).
- Victims of Trafficking
 - A victim of a severe form of trafficking shall be eligible for NMW cash assistance, without regard to the actual non-citizen status of the individual and to the same extent as a non-citizen immigrant who is admitted to the United States as a refugee under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In order to allow eligibility for a victim of trafficking, HSD will require a certification from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) that an adult is a victim of severe

trafficking or that a child has been determined eligible as a minor victim of severe trafficking.

- State funded Legal Non-Citizen
 - A non-citizen who arrived in the United States on or after August 22, 1996, and who meets the definition of qualified non-citizen is not eligible for federally funded TANF assistance under the terms of Title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (five years from the date the non-citizen residing in the U.S. received qualified non-citizen status). The qualified non-citizen may be included in the NMW benefit group, if otherwise eligible, and may receive cash assistance, with the cost of the non-citizen's benefits paid entirely by state funds. Benefits paid to these individuals are claimed as part of the state's MOE requirement.
- Ineligible Non-Citizens
 - Undocumented non-citizens who are not qualified non-citizens, non-citizens who are in the United States temporarily, or non-citizens who are not authorized to work in the United States, are not eligible for inclusion in the NMW benefit group.
- Residence: To be eligible for NMW, the household must reside in New Mexico with the intent to remain. Persons traveling through, employed for a short term, present for medical care, or in similar situations do not meet residency requirements. The residence of the dependent child is based on the residence of the child's parent, relative or caretaker.
- Other Assistance: An individual who receives cash assistance from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Bureau of Indian Affairs-General Assistance (GI-BIA), another State or Tribal TANF program, is ineligible for NMW based on concurrent receipt of assistance.

K. SET FORTH OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR THE DELIVERY OF BENEFITS AND THE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND FOR FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION OF HOW IT WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECIPIENTS WHO HAVE BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED TO BE HEARD IN A STATE ADMINISTRATIVE OR APPEAL PROCESS (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(III) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

- Notice Affecting Eligibility: Applicants for and participants of NMW are provided written notice of Department decisions affecting benefit group or individual eligibility, amount of benefit, and about delays in action affecting timely processing of applications. In cases where the Department is taking an action that adversely affects the eligibility or benefit amount of a recipient, the recipient is issued a notice of adverse action 13 days prior to actual implementation of the action. Where advance notice is not given, the household is provided with notice of the change at the same time the change is made (concurrent notice).
- Fair Hearing Rights: The fair hearing process is available to a benefit group who believes that an HSD decision affecting benefit group or individual eligibility, amount of benefit

or procedures related to eligibility and/or benefit calculation is based on incorrect information or represents a faulty application of program regulations. Failure by HSD to act within established time frames is also subject to the fair hearing process.

Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of their rights and the procedures for requesting a fair hearing.

- Time Limit for Requesting a Hearing
 - An applicant or recipient has 90 days from the date on the notice of adverse action to request a fair hearing. To be considered timely, the request must be received by the HSD Fair Hearings Bureau or the local county office no later than the close of business on the 90th day
 - Continuing Benefits During the Hearing Process
 - If the recipient files a fair hearing request prior to expiration of the 13-day adverse action time period, the change is not made pending completion of the fair hearing process. If an individual files a fair hearing request within 13 days of issuance of a concurrent notice, benefits are restored pending completion of the fair hearing process. Excess benefits issued during the fair hearing process must be repaid if the hearing is decided in favor of the Department.
 - Applicant or Recipient Rights During the Hearing Process
 - An applicant or recipient has the following rights with respect to the conduct of a fair hearing. The claimant has the right to:
 - Review the household's case file prior to, during and after the hearing;
 - Request and receive copies of documents in the case file for use during the hearing process;
 - Request an agency review conference to be scheduled prior to the hearing to discuss the issues involved in the hearing. The agency conference is optional and does not delay or replace the hearing process;
 - Bring witnesses to present information that is relevant to the case;
 - Submit evidence to establish facts and circumstances in the case;
 - Advance arguments without undue interference; and
 - Question or contradict any testimony or evidence, including the opportunity to conform and cross-examine the Department's witnesses.
 - Who Conducts the Hearing

- The hearing is conducted by an independent hearing officer who makes a recommendation to the Director of the Income Support Division or designee. The ISO Director makes the fair hearing decision for the Department. Fair hearings are most frequently conducted telephonically, but a face-to-face hearing may be held at the applicant's request.
- Appealing a Decision of the Director
 - If the applicant or recipient does not agree with the fair hearing decision, the decision may be appealed to the New Mexico Court of Appeals. NMSA 1978, Section 27-2B-13(F).
- Cost for Copying Documents
 - The costs of the fair hearing and costs for copying relevant Department records to be used by the applicant or recipient in the fair hearing are met by HSD. HSD is not responsible for meeting any other costs incurred by the applicant or recipient in either the fair hearing or judicial appeals process.

L. INDICATE WHETHER THE STATE INTENDS TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS TO TRAIN FOR, SEEK, AND MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT (SECTION 402(A)(1)(B)(V) OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)—

1. PROVIDING DIRECT CARE IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY (AS SUCH TERMS ARE DEFINED UNDER SECTION 1397J OF THIS TITLE); OR
2. IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS RELATED TO ELDER CARE, HIGH-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS, OR OCCUPATIONS EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE LABOR SHORTAGES AS, DETERMINED APPROPRIATE BY THE STATE FOR WHICH THE STATE IDENTIFIES AN UNMET NEED FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL, AND, IF SO, SHALL INCLUDE AN OVERVIEW OF SUCH ASSISTANCE.

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) has a Governmental Service Agreement with New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) Work and Family Support Bureau (WFSB) to provide Career and Educational services through short term training opportunities (TANF-VT).

M. PROVIDE FOR ALL MOE-FUNDED SERVICES THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION: THE NAME OF THE PROGRAM BENEFIT OR SERVICE, AND THE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA THAT FAMILIES MUST MEET IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THAT BENEFIT OR SERVICE. IN ADDITION, FOR TANF MOE-FUNDED SERVICES (CO-MINGLED OR SEGREGATED MOE) DESCRIBE THE PROGRAM BENEFIT PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE FAMILIES (SSP SERVICES DO NOT HAVE TO INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION BUT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ENCOURAGES IT) (§263.2(B)(3) & §263.2(C) PREAMBLE PAGES 17826-7)

- The following funds listed below are state expenditures that are counted towards the state's MOE requirement for eligible families only. THE NM Human Services Department manages eligibility determination and fund issuance to participants for all programs listed below:
 - State Funded Immigrants

- An immigrant who arrived in the United States on or after August 22, 1996, and who meets the definition of qualified immigrant is not eligible for federally funded TANF assistance under the terms of Title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (five years from date of entry into the U.S. with a qualified immigrant status). The qualified immigrant may be included in the NMW benefit group, if otherwise eligible, and may receive cash assistance, with the costs of the immigrant's benefits paid entirely, and may receive cash assistance, with the costs of the immigrant's benefits paid entirely by State funds.
- Transition Bonus Program
 - This program was implemented July 1, 2008, as required by the 2007 Legislature Regular session. This program was implemented to encourage participants of NMW Cash Assistance to leave NMW for employment.
 - Eligible benefit groups must have: 1) a monthly gross income less than 150% FPL; 2) received fewer than 60 months of TANF; 3) received at least three months of TANF; and 4) received at least one month of TANF in the last three months. Eligible benefit groups receive a monthly fixed bonus of \$200 during an 18-month
 - lifetime limit certification. Benefit groups are required to submit two six-month reports during the 18-month certification.
- Child Support Disregard
 - The first \$100 in child support collected by the Child Support Enforcement Division is passed on to the TANF benefit group. This money is disregarded or not counted as income in determining eligibility. This has the effect of increasing the monthly benefit amount. The total expenditure for that child support disregard is paid with State MOE dollars.
 - Early Childhood Education and Care Department: Human Services Department and Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) will develop training programs for NMW participants to become licensed daycare providers. New Mexico utilizes both state and federal funds in program administration of these services. ECECD also provides several other programs that are essential to eligible TANF participants who have at least one child in the home such as:
- Childcare TANF
 - Available to all families receiving TANF and TANF eligible families. Childcare is provided through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). The purpose of this program is to assist and support low-income families in caring for their children while the adult family members work or are engaged in training or other work-related activities. The relevant TANF

purpose is to provide assistance to families in need so children may remain in their homes or the homes of relatives.

- Childcare for low-income non TANF households
 - Childcare services are available to low-income families receiving non-TANF funded childcare assistance through the CCDF and the New Mexico State general fund.
- Taxation and Revenue Department
 - Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
 - The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit is 40% of the expenses incurred during the tax year. This credit helps families with a modified gross income of \$30,160 or less to pay for the childcare they need to work or look for work.
 - Low Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate
 - The Low-Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate allows a rebate to households with a modified gross income of \$22,000 or less.
 - Many low-income New Mexicans qualify for this rebate as it is not an income-based credit. It rebates a portion of the gross receipts tax on necessities. The rebate amount ranges depending on a taxpayer's modified gross income and number of exceptions claimed on the state income tax return.
 - The Working Families Tax Credit
 - A New Mexico resident who qualifies for the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit may claim a credit against their New Mexico tax liability. This is called the Working Families Tax Credit. Any amount more than the tax liability is refunded to the taxpayer.
 - Low Income Property Tax Rebate
 - The Property Tax Rebate for low-income residents who file a return and incur a property tax liability on their principal place of residence during the tax year and who are not dependents of another person. The rebate is based on modified gross income on a sliding scale from \$0 to \$16,000 and results in a rebate of a percentage of the taxpayer's property tax liability.
 - Special Needs Adopted Child Credit
 - Special Needs Adopted Child Credit allows a rebate to taxpayers who adopted a special needs child.
- Public Education Department: Graduation Reality and Dual Roles Skills (GRADS):
The mission of the multi component New Mexico GRADS system is to facilitate

parenting teen's graduation and economic independence; promote healthy multi-generational families; and reduce risk-taking behaviors.

- Children, Youth, and Families Department manages eligibility determination and fund issuance to participants for all programs listed below:
 - Community Based Services
 - The purpose of these programs is to improve and enhance the emotional, mental, and behavioral health of children, youth and eligible families served. The outcomes of this program include improved child behavioral and emotional functioning, reduced substance abuse, and improved school performance, improvement in family functioning, increased home stability/safety, and decrease in involvement in the legal system. For TANF, these services provide assistance to families in need so children may remain in their own homes or the homes of relatives. Children eligible for Medicaid up to 235% of poverty are eligible to participate.
 - Domestic Violence
 - Domestic violence provides an array of residential and non-residential services for adult survivors and child witnesses of domestic violence. Services include shelter care, counseling, crisis intervention, case management, life skills, education, and training.
 - Keeping Families Together
 - Keeping Families Together (KFT) utilizes long-term supportive housing as a tool to reduce child abuse and neglect and prevent foster care among homeless and inadequately housed families.
- Community Programs available through local state agencies.
 - S.A.F.E. House
 - The shelter provides a safe haven from domestic violence where residents receive nutritious meals, clothing and personal needs; health care; individual and group counseling; employment and housing referrals; transportation; legal advocacy and information; counseling for children and parental support.
 - S.A.F.E. house services are available to all victims of domestic violence, regardless of gender. Services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
 - Bienvenido's Outreach
 - Bienvenido's manages three programs that provide assistance with basic needs to needy families. The food box program assists participants with groceries. The lunch bag program assists with lunch bags for the homeless and the clothing program provides clothing, housewares, books, etc. free of charge to its participants.

- Casa Familia Urgent Transition Center and Sonrisa Family Supportive Living Programs
 - The Casa Familia Urgent Transition Center program provides emergency shelter for women, children, and families. The Sonrisa Family Supportive Living program provides transitional housing for formerly homeless women, children, and families. Both programs are managed through the Saint Elizabeth Shelter Corporation.

TANF CERTIFICATIONS

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must provide a certification by the chief executive officer of that State, that during the fiscal year, the State will:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
2. Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the state will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
3. Specify which state agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)—	
3. (A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the state so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and	Yes
3. (B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;	Yes
4. Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the state and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the state program	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act);	
5. Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the state program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act);	Yes
6. (optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).—	
6. (A) screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;	Yes
6. (B) refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and	Yes
6. (C) waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).	Yes
7 Establish and enforce standards and procedures to*—	
7. (A) ensure that applicants and potential applicants for assistance under the state program funded under this part are notified of assistance made available by the state to victims of sexual	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;	
7. (B) ensure that case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the state program funded under this part are trained in—	
7. (B) 1. the nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;	Yes
7. (B) 2. state standards and procedures relating to the prevention of, and assistance for, individuals who are victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and	Yes
7. (B) 3. methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and	Yes
7. (C) ensure that, if a state has elected to establish and enforce standards and procedures regarding the screening for, and identification of, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking pursuant to paragraph (7)—	
7. (C) 1. the state program funded under this part provides information about the options under this part to current and potential beneficiaries; and	Yes
7. (C) 2. case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the state programs funded under this part are provided with training regarding state standards and procedures pursuant to paragraph (7).	Yes

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

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

JOBS FOR VETERANS' STATE GRANTS

(OMB Control Number: 1293-0017)

Components of the Jobs for Veterans State Grants State Plan

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) recipients must provide a four-year state plan as a condition for the receipt of annual funding in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c). This plan must include responses to each of the components below.

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES TO VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE PERSONS UNDER THE JVSG PROGRAM (I.E., VIRTUALLY AND IN-PERSON).

The State intends to provide employment, training, and job placement services for veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG for covered persons as defined in VPL 05-24 or current guidance. Veterans and covered persons receive service for qualified job training programs or services for workforce preparation, development, or delivery that is directly funded (in whole or in part) by the Department of Labor. Qualified job training programs consist of universal access programs, discretionary targeting programs, and statutory targeting programs.

Veterans and other eligible persons will be assessed by Wagner-Peyser staff only upon entry (physically access service delivery points or who access virtual service delivery programs or websites) to determine if they meet the requirements to be served under JVSG and have one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE). If so, they will be immediately referred to a DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff or, in instances where a DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER is not available, another American Job Center staff person for individualized career services. If no SBEs are determined, or they do not meet the eligibility requirements for DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER activities, then they will be referred to another AJC provider. SBE veterans and eligible persons will be provided individualized career services to help overcome each of their barriers, including, but not limited to being placed in case management. The DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER and AJC staff will make referrals to partner programs for additional assistance needed and any training opportunities in which the eligible person has identified as having an interest. Veterans and eligible persons are provided employment services that include assistance in completing universal access registration, attendance at the workforce center orientation and assessments to determine their employment training needs.

Veterans and eligible persons with SBE that are referred to DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff will have a Comprehensive Objective Assessment (COA) and an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) completed in the Workforce Connection Online System (WCOS). A DVOP specialist or DVOP/LVER staff will be assigned as the veteran's or eligible person's Case Manager for participation in career planning (case management) and provide him or her

individualized career services and conduct consistent follow-up meetings on a bi-weekly basis, at a minimum, until an employment or training outcome is successfully achieved. When the veteran or eligible person is found to be job ready, the DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff or AJC staff will work with LVER staff and Business Services Team (BST) member to identify employment opportunities that match the veteran or eligible person's skill set and make the appropriate referral to employer(s).

B. LIST THE POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED BY DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) AND CONSOLIDATED POSITION STAFF, INCLUDING THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REFERRAL FOR DVOP SERVICES.

DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff (refer to Note below for Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff description) provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and eligible persons experiencing significant barriers to employment, with an emphasis on assisting eligible veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. VPL 03-14 with Changes 1 and 2, VPL 07-14, and VPL 03-19, or current guidance, provides policy guidance on eligible veterans/eligible persons with significant barriers to employment and include the following:

A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms as defined in 38 U.S.C §4211 (l) and (3); special disabled and disabled veterans are those:

- who are entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay,
- would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or
- were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;
- A homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b)), as amended;
- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- A low-income individual (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36)).
- Veterans aged 18-24;
- Vietnam-era Veterans;
- Transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive services (now referred to as Individualized Career Services);
- Members of the Armed of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities (MTF) or warrior transition units (WTU); and

- The spouses and other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.

DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER individualized career services provided to eligible veterans, eligible persons and additional populations are:

- Comprehensive assessment interviews
- Career guidance services
- Individual Employment Plans (IEP)
- Staff-assisted job search activities
- Labor Market Information

Veterans and eligible persons who are identified as having a SBE must be immediately referred to a DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff. In instances where a DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff is not available, another WCC staff representative will provide individualized career services.

Eligible veterans and eligible persons who do not fall into one of the categories that are served by DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are eligible to be served by other WCC staff, including WIOA, WP and other WCC program staff.

Case management (career planning) continues to be an appropriate service delivery strategy or framework within which individualized career services may be delivered, particularly for covered persons. DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff focus on providing individualized career services, which should be accomplished through the case management approach as taught by the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI). The three elements of case management consist of the following:

- A comprehensive assessment to determine realistic employment goals and identified barriers to achieving those goals;
- A documented plan of actions and services designed to overcome the barriers that exist and achieve the employment goals identified; and
- Regular, consistent contact between the DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff and the eligible participant, including meetings and updates, both pre- and post-employment. Consistent contact is based on the participant's individual needs and situation per the written plan and case notes. This also includes any documented attempted contact.

Managing the DVOP Caseload. In the event that a DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff does not have a full case-load of covered persons who meet the SBE categories or prioritized additional categories, the DVOP specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff may perform additional activities, in the order specified below:

- Review all open case files of current participants with a SBE or in a priority category and perform career planning duties.
- Conduct relationship building, outreach and recruitment activities with other service provider in the local area, to enroll SBE and priority category veterans in WCC.

C. DESCRIBE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ASSIGNED TO DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALISTS, LOCAL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVE (LVER) STAFF, AND CONSOLIDATED DVOP/LVER POSITIONS BY THE STATE. THESE MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH 38 U.S.C. 4103A AND 4104.

- Planning and participating in job and career fairs
- Conducting employer outreach
- In conjunction with employers, conducting job searches and workshops, and establishing job search groups
- Coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs, and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans
- Informing federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans
- Coordinating and participating with other business outreach efforts LVER staff are members of the business services team. They are responsible for "Facilitating employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in the employment service delivery system.

Note: Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff perform both the duties of a DVOP specialist and a LVER staff and this position promotes a more efficient administration of services to veterans, with a particular emphasis on services to disabled veterans; and does not hinder the provision of services to veterans and employers. Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff positions provides individualized career services to eligible veterans and eligible persons. There are six Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff approved in our staffing grant currently. VPL 01-20 provides policy guidance on utilization of Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff positions.

D. DEMONSTRATE THE MANNER IN WHICH DVOP, LVER AND CONSOLIDATED DVOP/LVER STAFF ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS OR AMERICAN JOB CENTER (AJC). THIS DEMONSTRATION SHOULD SHOW ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN JVSG AND OTHER AJC STAFF, SUCH AS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN STAFF MEETINGS AND CROSS-TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

DVOP specialists, Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff, and LVER staff are an essential part of, and fully integrated into the employment service delivery system or network. They are Included among the service delivery partner staff, which consists of all staff employed by programs or activities operated by the partners listed in 29 U.S.C. 2841(b) that provide online and/or in person workforce development or related support services as part of the workforce development system. Other partner staff members included staff of WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and other network partner programs. Section 241 of the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act, Title II of Public Law 112-56) amended 38 U.S.C Section 4103A and Section 4104. The VOW Act amendments specifically prohibit DVOP specialists and LVERs from performing non-veteran related duties that detract from their ability to perform their statutorily defined duties related to meeting the employment needs of eligible veterans. By adding Section 241 (c) of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act amended 38 U.S.C Section 4102A by

adding subsection (h), to allow for a JVSG staff person to perform both the duties of a DVOP specialist and a LVER staff person, referred to as a consolidated DVOP/LVER position.

The State's employment service delivery staff members make the initial contact with the veteran. They conduct an assessment to determine Priority of Service and determine whether a veteran or eligible person has significant barriers to employment (SBE) or belong to an additional population of veterans as designed by the Secretary as cited in paragraph b. above. Veterans and eligible persons that are determined to have SBE are referred to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff assigned to that service delivery office for individualized career services and other DVOP role responsibilities. If the veteran does not have SBE, an employment services interviewer can assist them with receiving basic career services that are available at that service delivery office.

LVER staff or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are integrated into the State's employment service delivery system to perform a wide range of duties on behalf of veterans and eligible persons specifically related to outreach to the employer community and facilitation within the service delivery system. LVER staff or Consolidated DVOP/LVER are assigned duties that promote the advantages of hiring veterans to employers, employer associations, and business groups. LVERs or Consolidated DVOP/LVER advocate for all veterans served by the service delivery system with business, industry, and other community-based organizations by participating in appropriate business activities above.

NMDWS ensures that the New Mexico Jobs for Veterans' State Grant staff of DVOP specialists, Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff and LVER staff are properly integrated at the local Workforce Connection Centers (WCC). The integration brings together workforce partners and other key stakeholders through policy and planning. The integration utilizes the State's registration and intake process; service delivery offerings; co-enrollment policies and practices; specific program requirements for worker profiling and reemployment services; and its communication plan to conduct outreach and engagement of customers. DVOP specialists, Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff and LVERs are an essential part of and fully integrated into the WCC. They are included among the WCC partner staff, which consists of all staff employed by programs or activities operated by WCC that provide online and/or in-person workforce development or related support service as part of the workforce development system. Although the DVOP specialists, Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff and LVERs are integrated in WCC, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 prohibit DVOPs and LVERs from performing non-veteran related duties that detract from their ability to perform their statutorily defined duties related to meeting the employment needs of eligible veterans.

NMDWS makes optimal use of the services and linkages to other veteran service providers in the state to enhance the employability and placement of veterans seeking employment and training related services. The methods of delivery of these services includes partnerships with other veterans' service providers by cofacilitation with representatives from the following:

- NM Department of Veterans Services (DVS),
- Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves (ESGR),
- State rehabilitation program,

- College's veterans' resource centers when possible, or by maintaining close working relationships when location differences make co-facilitation impractical.
- We have formalized partnerships through Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with the VA Vocational and Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) program office, Veterans Court in the 2nd Judicial District Court, Goodwill Industries-HVRP, NM Veterans Integration Center, UNM Veterans' Resource Center, Los Alamos National Laboratories.
- We continue to seek collaboration with other federal, state, local, tribal governments, non-profit organizations and employers to fulfill our Jobs for Veterans mandates.

The State Veterans' Coordinator (SVC) facilitates workshops with statewide organizations and professional groups on topics of veterans and disabled veterans' employment; the value of hiring veterans, GI Bill benefits for apprenticeships, OJT, and work-study programs.

DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are out stationed to VA Medical Center's Supportive Employment Programs (Work and Compensated Therapy); Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, Supportive Services to Veterans and Families and veteran per diem grant recipient's, wounded warrior military treatment locations, veterans' court, and correctional facilities (minimum level). A DVOP specialist is designated as the Intensive Services Coordinator and is providing support currently for the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program Regional Office. The ISC will be scheduled and available at the VA VR&E location when it re-opens fully. DVOP specialists or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff supports and attends the Stand Down events and other community homeless events as part of their outreach. Additionally, they schedule and conduct outreach to Native American veterans located on tribal lands.

LVER staff or Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are team members in the WCC Business Section to meet with and assist employers with posting job orders. They assist with the organization of job fairs and meet with employers to identify job vacancies and skills needed for in-demand, high-demand, or high-wage careers. They work closely with WIOA partners, institutions of higher learning, other governmental, non-profit agencies, and the private sector that provides training or education benefits to prepare veterans with careers or job opportunities.

The NMDWS web site www.dws.state.nm.us provides public information activities and frequent press releases to inform veterans of services available through the WCC, including employment and job training opportunities. Information includes Job Seeker (Jobs and Careers, Licensed Occupations, and Career Exploration), Business (Apprenticeships, Start-ups, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, Work Keys, and Wage & Hour), Labor Relations (Public Works, Human Rights), Veterans (Resource Guide, Priority of Service), Labor Market Information (Data/ Statistics, Labor Market Reviews). The NMDWS web includes job fair and community events, small business expositions, WCC locations and contact information, links to workforce partners and available frequently asked questions.

E. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUALS AND/OR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES TO IMPROVE AND/OR ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO VETERANS, INCLUDING:

1. THE NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR ALL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS AND/OR OFFICES;

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) Employment Services Operations Division provides the administration of JVSG Incentive Awards Program. The award process will be inclusive of the full spectrum of the US DOL employment and training related programs and non-Federal partners. The general criteria to be considered are provided below:

- **Individual.** Eligible recipients for individual incentive awards are Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and any other individual who provides employment, training, and placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including labor exchanges funded by the Wagner-Peyser Act.
- **Employment Services Offices.** Employment Service Offices are eligible to receive incentive awards including any service delivery point that provides exemplary public employment and training services to veterans and eligible persons; Workforce Connection Centers operated by the NMDWS; or offices that contract with the State or Local Workforce Development Boards. The incentive awards may be used by employment service office recipients for any purpose. Awards to offices should be reserved for instances where most, if not all, employees in an office contribute to improving employment or training services offered and provided to veterans and eligible persons.
- **Selection Criteria.** The Selection Criteria for nominated individuals or Employment Services Offices must be based on performance or activities during the program year for which the award is given. The award consideration is for employees and offices that demonstrate outstanding outreach on behalf of veterans who have significant barriers to employment, especially homeless, justice-involved, disabled, and recently separated veterans. The incentive awards are for individuals and offices that promote employment opportunities for veterans within the local community or enhance provider awareness of veterans' or eligible persons' issues and resources.
- **Other Considerations.** Selection criteria for attitude, motivation, program improvement, positive feedback, and other indicators or outstanding performance should be given consideration in addition to numerical performance data.

The planned nomination, selection, and distribution of Incentive Award Funds.

- The NMDWS Veterans Incentive Awards Program Nomination Form will be used to nominate individuals and/or offices that will describe the exemplary or innovative approach of the nominee to assisting veterans and eligible persons. All nominations of eligible recipients will be considered for those nominations submitted from various specialized programs that serve certain target groups of veterans and eligible persons.
- NMDWS will establish an Incentive Awards Program Panel designated by the NMDWS Employment Services Operations Director with the State Veterans Coordinator (SVC) as recorder with no voting rights. The Incentive Awards Program implementation timeline is as follows:

July 1 to 31: Open season for nominations of individuals and/or offices are submitted to the SVC.

First Friday in August: SVC compiles all nomination forms and creates a list of nominees and submits it to the Incentive Awards Program Panel members.

Second Friday in August: Incentive Awards Program Panel members with the SVC meet to review, select, and approve nominations.

Third Friday in August: SVC submits the nomination list with awards amount to the NMDWS Secretary for review and approval. When approved, the nomination list then becomes the Incentive Awards Program Recipient list and is submitted to the Budget Office for obligation.

First Pay Period in September: The NMDWS Budget Office coordinates with Human Resources Office to ensure the Incentive Awards Program recipients will receive their cash award on the first pay period in September, but no later than the second pay period in September. The NMDWS Secretary will send email notification and congratulatory greetings to each Incentive Award Program recipient. The Incentive Award Program awards are provided below:

Level	Maximum Number of Awards	Maximum Cash Award Amount per Recipient Awarded
Level I	8	\$800.00
Level II	4	\$1,000.00
Level III	3	\$1,250.00

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. Sections 4102A(c)(7) and US DOL Veterans Program Letter (VPL) 01-24, dated October 5, 2023, no more than one percent of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant allocation that the state receives is to be obligated for the purpose of performance incentive awards in cash only, for eligible employees and employment service offices.

A JVSG grant modification request will be submitted with a new or revised Incentive Awards Program plan for the current fiscal year in the annual funding modification and/or a mid-year modification. The request will be submitted to the Director of Veterans' Employment Training (DVET) no later than the second Friday in August to ensure sufficient processing time prior to the close of the fiscal year. The approved Incentive Awards Plan must obligate incentive awards funds by September 30th of each year and liquidate these obligations by December 31 of the same year. Any unspent incentive award funding will be de-obligated during the grant close out of the applicable fiscal year. The incentive awards funds are not allowed for other purposes.

The NMDWS will provide an annual performance incentive award report along with the fourth quarter report due by November 14 each year detailing all incentive awards made to individuals and to offices. The annual performance incentive award report will contain the following:

1. Identification of all individual staff award recipients by name and title.
2. Identification of all office recipients by office name, location, type of office, and

3. Including the cash amount of each award that is funded by the incentive award allocation, and a description and value of each non-cash award that is funded by the base allocation, if applicable.

2. THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER AND VALUE OF CASH AWARDS USING THE ONE PERCENT INCENTIVE AWARD ALLOCATION;

The planned disbursement of incentive award funds. • Planned disbursement of incentive awards funds. NMDWS Veterans Incentive Awards Program Nomination Form will be used to nominate individuals that will describe their exemplary or innovative approach to assisting veterans and eligible persons. All nominations will be considered for awards and for those nominations submitted from various specialized programs that serve certain target groups of veterans and eligible persons. NM DWS establishes an Incentive Awards Program Panel designated by the Workforce Services Division Director with the State Veterans Coordinator as recorder with no voting rights. The Incentive Awards Program implementation timeline is as follows: July 1-31: Open season for nominations of individuals or offices are submitted to the State Veterans Coordinator. First Friday in August: State Veterans Coordinator compiles all nomination forms and creates list of nominees and submits to Incentive Awards Program Panel members. Second Friday in August. Incentive Awards Program Panel members with the State Veterans Coordinators meet to review, select, and approve nominations. Third Friday in August. State Veterans Coordinator submits the nomination list with awards amount for the NMDWS Secretary review and approval. When approved the nomination list then becomes the Incentive Awards Program Recipient list and submitted to the Budget Office for obligation. First Pay Period in September. The NMDWS Budget Office coordinates with Human Resources Office to ensure the Incentive Awards Program recipients will receive their cash award on the first pay period in September, but no later than the second pay period in September. The NMDWS Secretary will send email notification and congratulatory greetings to each Incentive Award Program recipient. The Incentive Awards Program cash awards are provided below: Level Maximum Cash Award Amount Number of Recipients Awarded Level I \$ 750.00 8 Level II \$1,000.00 4 Level III \$1,250.00 3

3. THE GENERAL NATURE AND APPROXIMATE VALUE OF NON-CASH PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO BE CHARGED TO THE BASE ALLOCATION; AND

All non-cash awards will be funded out of the base allocation and not from the one percent set-aside cash only award. Such awards may include Certificates or Plaques or other recognition of exemplary performance or activities by JVSG staff and/or state employment offices. No non-cash incentive award shall have a value in excess of \$100.00 and shall be approved by the NMDWS Employment Services Operations Director upon such procedure, conditions and terms as he or she may direct.

Non-cash awards will be assigned to the base allocation and reported with the fourth quarter report due by November 14 each year.

4. ANY CHALLENGES THE STATE MAY ANTICIPATE TO CARRYING OUT A PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM AS MANDATED BY 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(C). THIS SHOULD INCLUDE ANY STATE LAWS OR POLICIES THAT PROHIBIT SUCH AWARDS, IF APPLICABLE. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S EFFORTS IN OVERCOMING THOSE CHALLENGES.

The State of New Mexico and NMDWS do not anticipate any challenges in carrying out an incentive award program. There are currently no laws or policies in place in the State of New Mexico and NMDWS that prohibit or restrict the performance of any incentive awards to individuals or offices. There are no pending or proposed laws or policies in the State of New Mexico and NMDWS that prohibit or restrict the performance of any incentive awards to individuals or offices.

F. LIST THE PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR DIRECT SERVICES TO VETERANS PROVIDED BY JVSG STAFF, AS MEASURED BY PARTICIPANTS':

- employment rate in the second quarter after exit from the program;
- employment rate in the fourth quarter after exit; and
- median earnings in the second quarter after exit.

The established JVSG targets will cover veterans served by JVSG staff only. NMDWS JVSG performance measures in the chart provided below.

JVSG Performance Measures	JVSG Performance Measures
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	52.0%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	50.0%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,000.00

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.)

In 2022 the top four industry sectors employing New Mexico's older workers, and the projected growth of these sectors were:

- Health Care and Social Assistance employed 19.5% of New Mexicans over 55 years old, who are in the workforce. This sector has a projected growth rate of 16.8% for a total of 22,410 new jobs between 2020 and 2030.
- Retail Trade accounts for 12.5% of workers 55-plus. Its projected growth rate is a low 1.7% for 1450 new jobs.
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services claimed 11.3% of workers aged 55 or older, with growth projection of 12.0% in the current decade, or 7,200 new positions.
- Accommodation and Food Services is the employer of 8.2% of 55-plus workers and is projected to grow by 31.8% to create 24,000 new jobs.

This data regarding sectors employing older workers comes from the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) for the third quarter of 2022. Data regarding projected growth in each sector comes from a report by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Economic Research and Analysis Bureau. Projections are for the ten years from 2020 through 2030.

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))

Of the four industry sectors discussed above, Health and Social Services is the sector in which most SCSEP host agencies are found, and where most SCSEP participants find employment. Training as community health workers, office support workers, receptionists, drivers and custodial or maintenance staff has been successful. In the sector of Accommodation and Food Services, participants have received training in food safety and hygiene, while serving in Senior Centers. Some have gone on to positions in restaurants or been hired by their host agencies. Retail is the third sector where some training takes place. Retail can be learned in non-profit thrift stores, food banks or commodity distribution sites. Public Administration provides training for a few participants, mostly in clerical positions. Professional and Scientific Services is not a sector where SCSEP participants have found training or placement. Basic computer training and, where appropriate, Adult Basic Education are important for nearly all SCSEP participants. Some also benefit from English for Speakers of Other Languages. Assessment of participant skills and goals is key to successful training and placement. While in-demand jobs drive the economy and most SCSEP placement, occasionally a participant's unique dream can be realized to the satisfaction of all involved. One participant, with serious medical barriers, became a tutor for students at the local community college!

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))

The top five major occupational groups for employment growth in New Mexico are Food Preparation and Serving-Related; Personal Care and Service; Education, Training and Library; Office and Administrative Support and Sales and Related. These track closely with the areas where New Mexico plans to provide training for SCSEP participants as discussed above.

The types of skills seen frequently in SCSEP-eligible people include: office or clerical skills, such as receptionist, filing, basic bookkeeping, and data entry/typing; human relations skills, such as caregiving of adults and children, health care, customer service and sales/cashier; maintenance/custodial skills, such as plumbing, building maintenance, landscaping, gardening, carpentry, mechanical, and auto mechanics; Other skills may include commercial driving, reading, food preparation, care for animals, language translation, sports/coaching, creative arts, sewing and music.

In general, SCSEP participants possess good work ethics, they are loyal to a fault, and are very willing to work hard. These traits serve SCSEP participants well in any field that does not

require technical or specialized knowledge. The occupational groups that are projected to grow the fastest all have at least some positions that fit the traits of older workers.

Because eligible individuals are unique in the skills they bring, all individuals are assessed regarding their interests, abilities, and barriers. Upon assignment, Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) are developed with goals and timelines. They are reviewed and updated as goals are accomplished. Some SCSEP participants have obtained jobs that they didn't even conceive of when they started in the program. One participant was assigned to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Her training there introduced her to the staff and residents of local long-term care facilities. She got a job working as an activities coordinator at a local assisted living facility.

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 GRANTEEES 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))

WIOA Title I programs that provide services to adults, dislocated workers, Native Americans and seasonal farm workers may also serve SCSEP-eligible individuals. Current examples of such service include High School Equivalency Certificate Programs and English for Speakers of Other Languages, especially those operated through Adult Basic Education within the community college system. Increased collaboration with community colleges for such programs as computer literacy, work readiness and specific skill tracks is a goal of the SCSEP grantees in New Mexico. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs are another frequent co-enrollment for SCSEP participants. New Mexico's VR system is committed to co-location in the one-stops; this will make increased referrals and collaborations easier to achieve. It is a goal of SCSEP grantees to increase the co-enrollments between SCSEP and VR. Registering at the one-stops to receive Wagner-Peyser services is required of every SCSEP participant. The job search and job counselling services offered in this program are key to participant's search for unsubsidized employment. It is a goal of SCSEP programs to continue to educate one-stop staff on the unique needs of older workers, not only SCSEP participants, in order to ease the way for 55-plus workers to continue, or return to, gainful employment.

These programs are overseen by a system of state and regional workforce boards. While SCSEP representation is not required on these boards New Mexico SCSEP grantees attend the state workforce board and the Director of the state program serves on the central workforce board, which covers a four-county area that includes the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Participation on these boards enables SCSEP to present proposals and to forward the goals expressed above. All of these goals are focused on increasing SCSEPs integration into the one-stop system and the growth of new and innovative collaborations between SCSEP grantees and other WIOA Title I programs and their partners.

B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEEES WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

ALTSD is the designated State Unit on Aging under the Older Americans Act. As such, collaboration with area agencies on aging and their subcontractors is facilitated naturally. ALTSD places SCSEP participants in senior centers around the state to train as cooks' helpers, drivers delivering meals to the home bound, and receptionists. ALTSD requires senior center staff to assess SCSEP participants for benefit eligibility.

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))

ALTSD is engaged with a number of public and private organizations that serve older adults with low incomes.

In Bernalillo County: SCSEP providers coordinate training and outreach with the Community College of Central New Mexico (CNM), the City of Albuquerque, and The Roadrunner Foodbank.

In Dona Ana County: SCSEP providers collaborate with the Long-Term Ombudsman and Consumer and Elder Rights Programs, the New Mexico Department of Taxation and Revenue, and El Caldito Soup Kitchen.

In Luna County, SCSEP works with the Mimbres Museum, as well as the Luna County Senior Programs.

In McKinley County: SCSEP providers collaborate with the Shiwi Ts'ana Elementary School in Zuni Pueblo, Zuni Elderly Services and Catholic Charities.

In Sandoval County: SCSEP providers collaborate with One Day at a Time, a half-way house for returning citizens.

In San Juan County: SCSEP providers collaborate with the City of Farmington, the City of Aztec, the Frontline Mission, Catholic Charities, as well as several senior centers in Farmington, Upper and Lower Fruitland, and Aztec.

In Santa Fe County: SCSEP providers collaborate with Picuris Pueblo senior center, the Aging and Disability Resource Center and several senior centers.

In Valencia County: SCSEP providers collaborate with the Belen Art League and Abundant Grace Free Store.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))

The Department works with Adult Education programs in McKinley County (UNM) and Bernalillo County (CNM) in order to provide SCSEP participants with adult basic education, computer literacy, customer service skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages training. The goal is to train older workers to match the needs of employers in their respective areas. Toward that end, SCSEP providers continue to follow research published nationally regarding the Survey of Adult Skills, literacy initiatives, Career Pathway Evaluations, and Integrated Education and Training.

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)

Registering at the one-stops to receive Wagner-Peyser services is required of every SCSEP participant. The job search and job counselling services offered in this program are key to participant's search for unsubsidized employment. It is a goal of SCSEP programs to continue to educate one-stop staff on the unique needs of older workers, not only SCSEP participants, in order to ease the way for 55-plus workers to continue, or return to, gainful employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs are another frequent co-enrollment for SCSEP participants. New Mexico's VR system is committed to co-location in the one-stops; this increases referrals and makes collaborations easier to achieve. It is a goal of SCSEP grantees to increase the co-enrollments between SCSEP and VR. Currently one participant is receiving services from the New Mexico Commission for the Blind and assigned to a host agency through SCSEP.

Participation on regional and state workforce boards enables SCSEP grantees to present proposals focused on increasing SCSEPs integration into the one-stop system and the growth of new and innovative collaborations between SCSEP grantees and other WIOA Title I programs and their partners. It is a goal of SCSEP grantees in New Mexico to ensure that all boards in the state are aware of the needs and gifts of older workers, and to encourage their inclusion in economic considerations, especially as the older population of New Mexico is projected to increase dramatically in the next ten years.

F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

Several economic development organizations are already partners with SCSEP. Some are host agencies, some have provided training for SCSEP participants, and some provide supportive services. The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District is a very important partner to SCSEP. This organization operates the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (AAA), which oversees the provision of Older Americans Act services for all counties in New Mexico except Bernalillo. It also contracts with the ALTSD to provide Senior Employment Services, funded by state general funds.

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.)

SCSEP educates employers regarding the benefits of intentionally including older workers may include:

- Access to new sources of job applicants; older workers are becoming more plentiful.
- No recruiting costs for employers; ALTSD Employment Programs charge no fees to employers.

- Higher retention rates compared to traditional hires; statistics bear this out.
- Increased productivity; older workers take less sick time than younger workers on average.
- An enhanced reputation within the community; older workers are well-connected and will often share their opinions freely.
- Improved workforce effectiveness; older workers model excellent work habits and may mentor younger workers. Research has shown that teams that include older workers increase productivity.

The Individual Employment Plan is key to the placement of SCSEP participants. A clear goal, appropriate supportive services and training, skills development and job search expertise result in successful unsubsidized employment.

3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

The US Census Bureau population estimates for New Mexico as of July 1, 2023 show that New Mexico is now majority Hispanic, with 50.2% of the population. White, non-Hispanic, comprises another 35.7%; American Indian and Alaskan Native makes up 11.2%; Black or African American represents 2.7%; Asian comes in at 2.0%; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander is 0.2%; and Two or More Races makes up 2.8% of New Mexico's population. New Mexico's Vietnamese population is about 4,000 people and is 0.23%, while the Chinese population is 337 people, which represents 0.00028%.

The final Quarterly Progress Report for New Mexico's combined SCSEP programs in program year 2022 shows that of the persons served 43% were white, non-Hispanic, 32% were Hispanic, 14% Native American Indian, 3.5% Black or African American and 0.5% Two or More Races. The New Mexico SCSEP programs highly value the diversity of New Mexico. Living and working in a state where individuals identifying with minority groups form the majority of the state, adds interest and depth to every interaction. The varied cultures, languages, and customs bring opportunities for learning and exchange.

Continued service to minority populations will be facilitated by hiring practices with a strong emphasis on equal opportunity and utilizing translation programs to allow access to speakers of languages other than English. Outreach will be conducted at various cultural events, such as Juneteenth and Chinese New Year celebrations as well as the New Mexico State Fair and the New Mexico Conference on Aging.

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)

Need for community services in New Mexico is great. In 2022, 17.6% of New Mexicans had income below the federal poverty level. The need is widespread, though certain areas bear a disproportionate amount of the burden. Two counties served by New Mexico SCSEP show particularly high poverty rates. Luna County's poverty rate was 27.6% in the 2022 five-year

estimates from the American Community Survey. McKinley County's rate was even higher, at 30.3%.

While the need is widespread, organizations working to meet the need also cover the state. The New Mexico Aging and Disability Resource Center maintains a database with over 3,700 national, state and local resources to assist those in need in New Mexico. Its Resource Directory lists 40 providers serving Deming, the main city in Luna County. These provide financial, care-giving, nutrition and health services. For Gallup, the major city in McKinley County, the database lists 102 service providers, offering an even broader array of services.

Specific services widely recognized in order to promote economic development in New Mexico's rural areas are transportation and broadband access. Broadband access is a priority for the New Mexico Department of Information Technology. The department also has been working to coordinate governmental and private sector stakeholders through a working group and a new advisory committee. Federal funds have jumpstarted this effort. Regarding transportation, a resource map and needs assessment are being conducted. A pool of state money has been designated for services to older New Mexicans. Some of this funding is designated for transportation access.

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))

New Mexico's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services includes: a) increased technical capability for confidentially storing and accessing all information and documentation on-line; b) increased use of targeted training for participants, enabling them to quickly experience new, applicable knowledge; and c) more frequent one-on-one contact by SCSEP program operators with host agencies and participants.

1. The current hard copy files and system ties staff to an office for many hours per week. Obtaining professional case management software, with the accompanying hardware to implement it, would enable more time to be spent with participants and host agencies, as well as improving oversight of case documentation.
2. Participants in New Mexico's SCSEP have received most of their training from on-the-job coaching received at the host agency. Promptly placing new trainees in classroom settings can expand their experiences and increase their perspectives on what they are learning. In classroom settings they may also discover gifts they have to offer, in ways that may never occur in a workplace. Such dual-track training may improve self-esteem and encourage participants to seek unsubsidized employment more quickly.
3. A side benefit of improved technology will be more field time for SCSEP program operators, allowing a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and successes of participants.

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))

New Mexico's SCSEP will continue to pursue continuous improvement. All measures will be monitored at quarterly in-service meetings with case managers. All measures falling below the level of exceeding will be discussed and strategies for improvement implemented. Three of the seven measures relate to "entry into unsubsidized employment." These measures are:

- "The percentage of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the project." To achieve this measure and continuously improve, New Mexico's SCSEP will follow-up with each exited participant at least once per quarter, to determine if they are employed, and if there is assistance that could move them toward employment or assist them to retain employment.
- "The percentage of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the project." To achieve this measure and continuously improve, New Mexico's SCSEP will follow-up with each exited participant at least once per quarter for the four quarters after exit from the program. These contacts will determine if the participant is employed and what services might be offered to move the participant towards employment or assist in retaining employment.
- "The median earnings of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the project." To achieve this measure and continuously improve, New Mexico's SCSEP will contact each employer of a participant who exited the program for unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after their exit. During this contact the employer will be asked if there is any service that could be offered to the participant to improve their performance and probably retention.

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))

Need for community services in New Mexico is great. In 2022, 19.5% of New Mexicans had income below the federal poverty level. The need is widespread, though certain areas bear a disproportionate amount of the burden. Two counties served by New Mexico SCSEP show particularly high poverty rates. Luna County's poverty rate was 27.2% in the 2022 five-year estimates from the American Community Survey. McKinley County's rate was even higher, 32.3%, according to the same report.

While the need is widespread, organizations working to meet the need also cover the state. The New Mexico Aging and Disability Resource Center maintains a database with over 3,700 national, state and local resources to assist those in need in New Mexico. Its Resource Directory lists 40 providers serving Deming, the main city in Luna County. These provide financial, care-giving, nutrition and health services. For Gallup, the major city in McKinley County, the database lists 102 service providers, offering an even broader array of services.

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.

County	Cities	NM State Auth. Pos.	Goodwill Auth. Pos.	NICOA Auth. Pos.	Total NM Auth. Pos.	Changes from PY22
Bernalillo	Albuquerque	5	52	12	69	none
Catron	Reserve	0	0	0	0	none
Chaves	Roswell	0	8	0	8	none
Cibola	Grants	0	3	5	8	none
Colfax	Raton	0	2	0	2	none
Curry	Clovis	0	4	0	4	none
DeBaca	Fort Sumner	0	0	0	0	none
Dona Ana	Las Cruces	6	16	0	22	none
Eddy	Carlsbad & Artesia	0	4	0	4	none
Grant	Silver City	0	3	0	3	none
Guadalupe	Santa Rosa	0	0	0	0	none
Harding	None	0	0	0	0	none
Hidalgo	Lordsburg	0	1	0	1	none
Lea	Lovington & Hobbs	0	5	0	5	none
Lincoln	Ruidoso & Carrizozo	0	3	0	3	none
Los Alamos	Los Alamos	0	0	0	0	none
Luna	Deming	5	0	0	5	none
McKinley	Gallup and Zuni	10	0	7	17	none
Mora	Mora	0	1	0	1	none
Otero	Alamogordo	0	6	0	6	none
Quay	Tucumcari	0	1	0	1	none
Rio Arriba	Espanola	0	0	3	3	none

County	Cities	NM State Auth. Pos.	Goodwill Auth. Pos.	NICOA Auth. Pos.	Total NM Auth. Pos.	Changes from PY22
Roosevelt	Portales	0	2	0	2	none
Sandoval	Rio Rancho	2	10	8	20	none
San Juan	Farmington & Aztec	13	0	6	19	none
San Miguel	Las Vegas	0	5	0	5	none
Santa Fe	Santa Fe	5	8	3	16	none
Sierra	Truth or Consequences	0	3	0	3	none
Socorro	Socorro	0	2	0	2	none
Taos	Taos	0	6	4	10	none
Torrance	Moriarty	0	3	0	3	none
Union	Clayton	0	0	0	0	none
Valencia	Los Lunas & Belen	0	7	0	7	none
TOTALS		46	155	48	249	

3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

The two most imbalanced counties in New Mexico are Roosevelt County, which is 7 positions overserved and Doña Ana County, which is 15 positions overserved. As vacancies occur in these counties, positions will be filled in underserved counties, gradually restoring balance. No county is more than three positions underserved.

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.

SCSEP positions in New Mexico are currently distributed according to the distribution formula. No shifting of authorized positions is necessary. As participants in areas of over-service exit the program, these positions are moved to under-served areas.

B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

New Mexico's SCSEP eligible population was 19.8% rural according to the 2022 American Community Survey. The New Mexico State SCSEP served 22% rural clients in PY 2022. Overall,

New Mexico SCSEP contractors served 21% rural clients in PY 2022, which is in line with the state's population.

C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)

Group	ALTSD	NICOA	GII	New Mexico
75+	3% 1/32	0% 0/44	14% 22/156	10% 23/232
Disabled	50% 16/32	7% 3/44	28% 43/156	25% 59/232
Limited English/Low Literacy	44% 14/32	91% 40/44	73% 86/118	71% 140/198
Rural	22% 7/32	16% 7/44	22% 35/156	21% 49/232
Veteran/Spouse	3% 1/32	5% 2/44	17% 27/156	13% 30/232
Low Employment Prospects	84% 27/32	93% 41/44	75% 117/156	80% 185/232
No Success with WIOA Title I	3% 1/32	0% 0/44	0% 0/156	0% 1/232
Homeless or at Risk	41% 13/32	48% 21/44	22% 34/156	29% 68/232
Formally Incarcerate	3% 1/32	5% 2/44	1% 2/156	2% 5/232
Greatest Economic Need	69% 22/32	86% 38/44	51% 79/156	60% 139/232
Minority Individuals	44% 14/32	91% 40/44	50% 78/156	61% 132/232
Greatest Social Need	100% 32/32	100% 44/44	100% 156/156	100% 232/232

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio
Bernalillo	29.16%	Doña Ana	10.06%	Lincoln	0.99%	Rio Arriba	2.85%	Socorro	1.24%
Catron	0.53%	Eddy	2.05%	Los Alamos	0.73%	Roosevelt	0.70%	Taos	2.69%

County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio	County	Ratio
Chaves	3.73%	Grant	1.48%	Luna	1.80%	San Juan	6.15%	Torrance	1.08%
Cibola	1.36%	Guadalupe	0.30%	McKinley	4.84%	San Miguel	2.00%	Union	0.23%
Colfax	0.73%	Harding	0.04%	Mora	0.50%	Sandoval	4.21%	Valencia	3.38%
Curry	1.79%	Hidalgo	0.30%	Otero	3.70%	Santa Fe	7.02%		
De Baca	0.14%	Lea	2.96%	Quay	0.56%	Sierra	1.27%		

6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

Of those New Mexicans 55 years old or older with incomes at or below the 125% of the federal poverty level, 80.2% reside in urban areas, while 19.8% live in rural locations. This statistic comes from the American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2016 through 2021.

B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

According to the American Community Survey from 2023, it is estimated that there are 120,539 individuals who are 55 years of age or older and at or below 125% of the federal poverty level in New Mexico. The same source estimates that 90,039 of these people are below the federal poverty level (a measure for greatest economic need). The percentage of eligible individuals who have the greatest economic need is 74.7%.

C. ARE MINORITIES

Data regarding minority status are only available from the US Census for those below or above poverty level. These data show that 73.7% of those individuals over 55 years old, with incomes below the federal poverty level, identify themselves as racial and/or ethnic minorities. The figure for the total New Mexico population is 65.2% minority. It is likely that the eligible SCSEP population has slightly fewer individuals of minority status than those below the poverty level, but more than the general population. A good estimate is that 69.5% of SCSEP-eligible individuals in New Mexico are of minority status.

D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

In 2022 9.3% of New Mexicans over the age of five spoke English “less than very well”, according to the American Community Survey. This percentage is not broken out by age or by income, so it is not possible to get specifics for the SCSEP-eligible population. An estimate of 10% with limited English proficiency is a reasonable projection.

E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

Despite about four-fifths of SCSEP-eligible New Mexicans living in “urban” areas, this statistic can be misleading. Twenty-six of New Mexico’s thirty-three counties are considered “frontier”, they have six or fewer people per square mile. While these counties may have an urban area, those living in such urban centers are still isolated from many services.

New Mexico is also a “majority minority” state, that is, over 64% of New Mexicans claim racial/ethnic minority status. While such groups may have strong family ties, they are also burdened with health disparities, lower incomes on average and limited access to quality services.

The interaction of these two dynamics in New Mexico contributes to a high percentage of those with greatest social need. While this is not quantifiable, with at least one-fifth of SCSEP-eligible individuals living in rural areas and about 70% claiming minority status, about three quarters of SCSEP-eligible New Mexicans appear to fit this category. Even those who live in urban areas in New Mexico may face isolation, so the category of greatest social need is likely much more frequent than the statistics might indicate.

F. FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, AS DEFINED IN TEGL 17-20

According to the New Mexico Sentencing Commission Profile of New Mexico Prison Population FY 2023, "On June 30, 2023, there were 537 individuals confined on a new admission who were at least 55 years old who were not convicted of first-degree murder, thus meeting the new minimum age requirement for consideration for geriatric parole (though many other factors are considered before a person is considered eligible for geriatric parole). Of these, 59% are projected to be released within five years, and 78% are projected to be released within the next 10 years." This report also shows the total prison population over 50 years old was 1,160 on June 30, 2023. The distribution of incarcerated individuals tracks quite closely with the population of each county.

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))

If the ALTSD loses SCSEP positions every effort will be made to address this within the parameters of attrition. If this is not possible, and some trainee positions must be eliminated, the following plan will be implemented:

- (1) Participants will be notified in writing at least 30 days in advance of termination.
- (2) If a participant’s position is being terminated, efforts will be made to place the individual in unsubsidized employment, or another training opportunity, such as with the Foster Grandparent or Senior Companion Programs. Local One-Stop Centers will be utilized, along with other local contacts and resources, to identify potential jobs or other programs for which any terminated participants may be eligible.
- (3) From the time it is known that positions are to be eliminated, participants will be encouraged to use work time to seek employment or a new placement. The ALTSD will research the possibilities in each affected community and communicate the possibilities to participants who need assistance. Final payroll payments will be sent to participants by the normal method

used, unless specific instructions to the contrary are received from a participant. The notification letter will include a request for such instructions.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

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.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ADULT 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.5%	81.0%	76.5%	81.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.2%	80.0%	76.2%	80.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,200	\$9,600	\$8,200	\$9,600
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	70.0%	65.5%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.6%	70.5%	63.6%	70.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - DISLOCATED 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	70.4%	73.5%	70.4%	73.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	71.5%	73.5%	71.5%	73.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$7,850	\$8,898	\$7,850	\$8,898
Credential Attainment Rate	61.0%	68.5%	61.0%	68.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	75.5%	64.0%	75.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - YOUTH 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	70.0%	66.0%	70.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	73.5%	66.0%	73.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3,800	\$4,855	\$3,800	\$4,855
Credential Attainment Rate	52.0%	52.0%	52.0%	52.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	51.0%	55.0%	51.0%	55.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT - WAGNER PEYSER 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	60.7%	63.0%	60.7%	63.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.4%	63.0%	60.4%	63.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,570	\$7,170	\$5,750	\$7,170
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

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - 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 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	38.0%	41.0%	39.0%	41.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%	41.0%	33.0%	41.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,400	\$4,600	\$4,500	\$4,700
Credential Attainment Rate	27.0%	31.0%	28.0%	32.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	38.0%	40.0%	38.5%	41.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	43.0%	43.0%	44.0%	44.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.5%	41.5%	41.0%	42.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4808	\$5080	\$4900	\$5120
Credential Attainment Rate	38.1%	39.1%	38.5%	40.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	49.4%	53.4%	50.0%	53.9%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (BLIND) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed

approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	43.0	43.0	44.0	44.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.5	41.5	41.0	42.5
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4808.0	5080.0	4900.0	5120.0
Credential Attainment Rate	38.1	39.1	38.5	40.0
Measurable Skill Gains	49.4	53.4	50.0	53.9
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

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.

Additional Indicators of Performance
No additional indicator appendices will be added

OTHER APPENDICES

NA