

(I) State's Goals and Priorities.

Based on the DVR/SRC Needs Assessment completed in December of 2017, DVR and the SRC have established targets for Program Year 2020 for DVR's Strategic Plan goals. DVR and the SRC have also established goals and priorities in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). In particular, DVR and the SRC established goals and priorities related to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. All DVR goals and priorities are established within the Division's long-established strategic themes as follows:

- *Organizational Effectiveness*
- *Valued and Empowered Employees*
- *Prepared Job Seekers*
- *Collaborative Partnerships*

(A) Program Year 2020 Goals and Priorities

1. DVR will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.

DVR is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. We believe the new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. However, the WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of frontline staff on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, DVR decided to establish leading measures of activities expected to improve the longer-term WIOA outcome measures. The section below outlines these lead measures and how they are expected to influence the lagging outcome measures.

- **Leading Measure One:** The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options
- **Leading Measure Two:** The involvement of other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors and others) strengthens consumer engagement in completing their employment goal
- **Leading Measure Three:** Career focused education and training leads to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Four:** VR counseling with an emphasis on career focused plans will lead to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Five:** Continued support and encouragement after job placement results in better job retention and career advancement.

Targets for the Lead Indicators:

- 50% of cases will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- 50% of cases will involve other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors and others) to strengthen consumer engagement in completing their employment goal
- 35% of consumers in plan status will be enrolled in career focused education and training that leads to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- 35% consumers in plan status will have plans directed to achieving careers in higher wage employment
- 75% of DVR consumers will continue to be engaged in DVR services after job placement.

2. DVR will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.

DVR believes that in order to increase median earnings six months post closure, the agency must increase earnings at closure. Based on Needs Assessment data from 2017, 55% of DVR consumers were earning 110% of minimum wage or less at closure and only 18% of DVR consumers were earning over 150% of minimum wage at closure. These numbers improved by Program Year 2018 as follows:

- 58% had wage rates at or above 110% of the minimum wage at closure
- 38% had wage rates at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure
- 23% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage (above \$16 per hour) or at closure

DVR's continued focus of careers and higher wage employment will further improve these results. Therefore, the Program Year 2020 targets are as follows:

- 65% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 110% of minimum wage at closure
- 50% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure
- 30% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 150% of minimum wage at closure

3. DVR will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.

Post-secondary credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment and meaningful careers. In Program Year 2018, 244 participants were enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, and 48 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential. DVR seeks to dramatically increase participation in program years 2020 and 2021.

Targets:

Program Year 2020 Target: 500 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 125 DVR consumers will achieve a credential

Program Year 2021 Target: 600 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 150 DVR consumers will achieve a credential

4. In partnership with VDOL, DVR will create more opportunities for DVR consumers to participate in apprenticeship programs and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeships offer DVR consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential. Apprenticeships generally lead to higher wage employment. The development of apprenticeships is a new strategy for DVR. Therefore, we have partnered with the Vermont Department of Labor to establish apprenticeships for DVR consumers.

Targets:

Program Year 2020: 10 DVR consumers will enroll in registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Program Year 2021: 15 DVR consumers will enroll in registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

5. DVR will establish a Charter Group to determine how to improve transition services for youth and implement those improvements.

In 2015, DVR implemented a major restructuring of school to work transition services in response to the WIOA requirement to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). This included establishing a cadre of VR counselors and Youth Employment Specialists to work exclusively with high school students. DVR believes it is time to reassess this restructuring and look at how both Pre-ETS and VR services for students and youth could be improved.

In Program Year 2020 the Charter Group will develop a series of recommendations on how to improve and enhance Pre-ETS services in Vermont. Upon review and approval by the DVR management team, these recommendations will be implemented in Program Years 2020 and 2021.

6. DVR will improve outcomes for students and youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities served through the JOBS Supported Employment Program.

To align the JOBS supported employment programs with the wider DVR Careers Initiative, we have spent the last year working with designated agencies to establish new performance measures. DVR felt it was very important for JOBS youth to be included in the Careers Initiative and that our contracted performance measures reflect that intent. The JOBS program staff and managers were closely involved in the development of the new measures. There is strong buy in and support. The new measures are listed below:

- Total number of youth served with a DVR IPE
- Total number of youth who received at least one career assessment during the fiscal year (50% of total served)
- Total number of youth enrolled in career focused training or supported education during the fiscal year (30% of total served)
- Total number of youth placed in competitive employment for ten working days (70% of total served)
- Total number of youth with a higher wage IPE goal during the federal fiscal year (30% of total served)
- Total number of consumers employed at or above 125% of Vermont minimum wage at any time during the federal fiscal year (30% of total served)

7. DVR will explore and implement strategies to better serve job seekers with disabilities who are 55 and older.

Vermont is the second oldest state in the USA (behind Maine). More Vermonters are or want to stay in the workforce beyond retirement age. The Vermont economy needs older workers to meet the workforce needs of employers in the state. Despite this, Vermont DVR has only seen a modest increase in the percentage of applicants 55 and older. DVR will plan and implement strategies to engage older job seekers. These may include job fairs specifically for older workers, targeted outreach, staff training, and new partnerships. Because DVR is still in the planning stage, we have not developed specific targets for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

8. DVR will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).

Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities and careers. Creative Workforce Solutions is the employer engagement

and marketing arm of DVR. DVR measures employer engagement through the following three metrics:

- **New Employer Contacts:** These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS
- **Employer Activities:** These are defined as ongoing engagement activities with employers who have an ongoing relationship with CWS
- **Employer Opportunities:** These are defined as specific consumer opportunities such as a job opening, training opportunity, work based learning opportunity, company tour or informational interview

The annual targets for the CWS team for Program Years 2020 and 2021 are as follows:

- **Contacts:** 750 new contacts per program year
- **Activities:** 2,250 distinct engagement activities per program year
- **Opportunities:** 2,500 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year

9. DVR will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.

DVR recognizes that there continue to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals with severe disabilities who need supported employment services but are not eligible for long term supports through the Division of Developmental Services or the Department of Mental Health.
- Individuals with disabilities who are offenders and are transitioning into the general community
- Individuals with substance abuse/use disorders
- Survivors of traumatic brain injuries

DVR has formed a development team to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders. It also includes the development of grant applications to implement new services or expand and improve existing services.

10. DVR will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program's services through the bi-annual consumer satisfaction survey. DVR will also implement strategies to assess student and youth satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation and pre-employment transition services.

DVR contracts bi-annually with an independent survey organization to assess consumer satisfaction statewide and by district. This data is critical to helping us improve services and provide better customer service. DVR has consistently maintained high overall rates of satisfaction. In 2018, 96% of consumers said that they would recommend that their friends or family members seek help from DVR; this is up one percent from the 2016 survey. Another area of strength revealed in the 2018 survey, was 92% of consumers reporting they were satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and DVR counselors; this is a two percent increase from the previous survey.

In part because of the implementation of Pre-ETS in Vermont, the overall population served by DVR has trended younger. In Program Year 2018 over 50% of participants were either youth or students

under the age of 24. Because of this shift we think it is important for DVR to develop new strategies to assess student and youth satisfaction with DVR services.

Targets:

- In the 2021 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, at least 96% of DVR consumers will report they would recommend DVR to family and friends and 92% will report they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and counselors.
- In Program Year 2020, DVR will implement youth specific strategies to assess satisfaction with VR and Pre-ETS services.

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

See Goals 6 and 8 in Section (A)