

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

DVR and the SRC have established goals and priorities, as well as targets, for Program Years 2022 and 2023. These are based on the DVR/SRC Needs Assessment completed in December of 2020, and in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA, particularly the Common Performance Measures. All DVR goals and priorities are established within the Division's long-established strategic themes:

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

Program Year 2022 Goals and Priorities

- 1. DVR will continue to 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 has established leading measures expected to improve the longer-term WIOA outcome measures. DVR has already seen improvement in some of the most meaningful and lagging Common Performance Measures since implementing them. The following is a list of the leading measures and how they are expected to positively impact the lagging outcome measures:

- **Leading Measure One:** The use of career assessment tools supports exploration of and better matches between consumers and higher wage and higher skill employment options.

- Leading Measure Two: The involvement of other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors, and others) strengthens consumer engagement in completing their employment goals.
- Leading Measure Three: Career focused education and training leads to higher wage and higher quality employment and retention.
- Leading Measure Four: VR counseling with an emphasis on career focused plans will lead to higher wage 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 goals.
- 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 aimed at 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 Vermont 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 2020, 62.4% of DVR consumers were earning 125% of minimum wage or less at closure and 21.1% of DVR consumers were earning 150% or more of minimum wage at closure. These numbers improved in Program Year 2020 as follows:

- 70.11% had wage rates at or above 110% of the minimum wage at closure.
- 54.16% had wage rates at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure.
- 32.81% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage (above \$16 per hour) or at closure.

DVR's continued focus on careers and higher wage employment will further improve these results. Therefore, the Program Year 2022 targets are as follows:

- 70% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 110% of minimum wage at closure.
- 55% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure.

- 35% 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 2020, 506 participants were enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, and 111 participants completed a program and earned a credential. DVR seeks to continue to increase participation in program years 2022 and 2023.

In addition, DVR recognizes that post-secondary training and education is an important tool for mature workers who are looking to re-enter the workforce or re-train for a new career. DVR will continue to develop tools and resources that allow Vermonters aged 55 and over to learn about and access these training opportunities.

Targets

Program Year 2022 Target: 700 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 175 DVR consumers will achieve a credential.

Program Year 2023 Target: 800 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 200 DVR consumers will achieve a credential.

4. 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, and there is strong buy in and support. The new measures are:

- 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).

The JOBS Dashboard was developed to support the JOBS program staff in tracking their activities and work with DVR consumers. It is a tool to help Transition Counselors and Designated Agency staff monitor JOBS outcomes and assist with reporting and invoicing. Using real-time data from VR's Aware system records, the JOBS Dashboard displays only the most relevant JOBS program information in a concise and easy-to-use way. It is designed to streamline effective coordination of JOBS program services, enhance case management between partners, and facilitate complete and accurate data collection.

5. 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. Understanding labor market trends and needs is an essential function of the CWS team and is a key role for our Business Account Managers. DVR measures employer engagement through the following metrics:

- **New Employer Contacts:** These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS.
- **Employer Activities:** These are defined as 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.
- **Caseload Driven Outreach:** Caseload Driven outreach is defined as labor market outreach directly related to consumers on counselors' current caseloads. Business Account Managers are tasked with directing two-thirds of their activities to caseload needs.

In Program Year 2021, the CWS team activity counts for the above activities were as follows:

- New Employer Contacts: 768
- Employer Activities: 2,871
- Employer Opportunities: 3,358
- Caseload Driven Outreach: 1,470

The annual targets for the CWS team for Program Years 2022 and 2023 are as follows:

- Contacts: 775 new contacts per program year
- Activities: 2,500 distinct engagement activities per program year
- Opportunities: 2,750 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year
- Outreach: 1,650 distinct consumer opportunities developed based on caseload need.

6. 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 Vermont populations with disabilities that are unserved or underserved. 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 community.
- Individuals with substance 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. DVR is hopeful that within the next year or two, there will be pilot sites established in collaboration with other agencies and community partners to support consumers managing opioid addiction and recovery, as well as those consumers who manage significant mental health conditions but are not eligible for Community Rehabilitation and Treatment programs. These pilots will help DVR identify services and partnerships that support consumers managing these disability types to participate in the workforce in the most meaningful way possible.

7. DVR will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program's services through the bi-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

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 2019 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 2019 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. DVR is currently under contract with a vendor to complete the next consumer satisfaction survey. This is happening later than usual due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in our contract management system.

DVR expects to see an upward trend in consumer satisfaction, despite managing significant changes in service delivery during the pandemic. The 2022 survey will include questions that determine consumer's level of satisfaction with remote service delivery, as well as how the pandemic has impacted their ability or willingness to pursue employment.

Targets:

- At least 96% of DVR consumers will report they would recommend DVR to family and friends.
- At least 92% will report they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and counselors.

8. DVR will evaluate how to deliver the most effective remote services to customers given the COVID-19 pandemic.

DVR shifted to a remote service delivery model in March of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumer meetings and business outreach have been conducted by utilizing virtual meetings and telephone calls. Supporting DVR customers to obtain the necessary tools and technology to be able to actively engage in these virtual services has been a top priority. A set-aside fund was created to enable staff to support consumers in purchasing the tools or services they need. As of November 1, 2021, DVR staff moved to a hybrid service delivery model working some days in the DVR offices and some days remotely. Continuing to evaluate the efficacy of this service delivery model will be crucial to refining the tools and practices that work best for consumers.

The 2022 DVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey will include questions that:

- Measure consumer satisfaction of DVR's virtual service delivery.
- Determine consumer's preference for virtual vs. in-person meetings.

9. DVR will implement strategies to ensure cultural competency and awareness for DVR staff, policies, and practices.

DVR has committed to ensuring that all staff receive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training in an effort to provide the most equitable, high-quality services to

consumers. An external contractor will be selected to provide this training and will focus on ensuring DVR staff become more aware of cultural competence and consciousness. The work of this contractor will be on-going as DVR focuses on:

- Reviewing and redefining our organizational values to explicitly include DEIA.
- Integrating DEIA into DVR's strategic planning.
- Reviewing current DVR policies and practices and determining how they can be improved to support DEIA.
- Developing recruitment and retention strategies intended to more accurately reflect the diversity of the population served by DVR.
- Assessing how welcoming the DVR program is to diverse populations and groups.
- Considering new outreach strategies for DVR to engage everyone in our community, especially marginalized groups.