

South Dakota WIOA Combined State Plan

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.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thank you for reviewing South Dakota's first combined WIOA State Plan. A theme you will notice throughout the plan is that **partnerships** work in South Dakota. Our most significant challenges are not a result of a lack of collaboration, but rather the capacity that comes from being a small, minimally funded state. We are small, but mighty; wise stewards of the taxpayer's dollar, and we leave a lasting impact.

The One-Stop System in South Dakota is comprised of a partnership between the Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR), Department of Human Services (DHS), Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, U.S. Forest System, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe, Board of Technical Education, Department of Education (DOE), and Department of Social Services (DSS). As a single-area state, the Workforce Development Council (WDC) convenes and guides this partnership. This partnership is established through a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WDC and One-Stop Partners**. The agreement outlines the vision, system structure, operating budget, confidentiality, accessibility, non-discrimination and equal opportunity, indemnification, dispute resolution, modification process, and effective period. The MOU can be found in Appendix 2.

In 2022, DLR hosted the first-ever Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Partner Symposium that brought together representatives from WIOA core programs, required partners, and others impacted by the workforce system in South Dakota, including K-12 education, corrections, and the business community. Information gathered from these events has helped to create this plan and the goals through June 2028. In 2024, we began a partnership with the Governor's Office of Economic Development to host this event during their annual economic development conference. This gathering brings together local economic developers, workforce development professionals, and businesses. In 2025, a workforce track will be implemented.

South Dakota has deviated from previous state plans and is including both the Jobs for Veterans Services Grant and the Senior Community Services Employment Program in this document to create the state's first **Combined State Plan**. With DLR serving as the administrative entity for both programs, they are well integrated into other workforce programs, making this a seamless transition. We look forward to continued alignment federally with other workforce programs in hopes of future integration.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

- (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 State's economic conditions and trends, 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.*

Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Tabulations by industry and occupation of jobs advertised online for the prior six months (April 2025 through September 2025) were used as an indicator of existing demand. Based on this metric, the South Dakota industries with the greatest existing demand for workers are: Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; Educational Services; Manufacturing; Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services; Public Administration; and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. Each of these sectors individually accounted for about 5% or more of total openings listed online, and for more than 75% of job openings when combined.

Online-Advertised Job Openings by Industry April 2025 - September 2025		
Industry	Number of Job Openings	Percent of Total Openings
Health Care and Social Assistance	16,295	33.8%
Retail Trade	4,976	10.3%
Educational Services	4,066	8.4%
Manufacturing	3,165	6.6%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	3,066	6.4%
Public Administration	2,535	5.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,236	4.6%
Source: Online advertised jobs data in the online data system hosted by Geographic Solutions, Inc. and provided by Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, Oct. 28, 2025.		

Tabulations of job openings by major occupational group for the same time period indicate the types of occupations with the greatest existing demand are: Healthcare Practitioners and Technical; Management; Sales and Related; Healthcare Support; Office and Administrative Support; Transportation and Material Moving; Installation, Maintenance, and Repair; Business and Financial Operations; and Food Preparation and Serving. Each of these groups accounted for more than 3% of total openings by occupational group for the prior six months. Combined, they accounted for over 75% of the job openings.

Online-Advertised Job Openings by Occupational Group April 2025 - September 2025		
Occupational Group	Number of Job Openings	Percent of Total Openings
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	17,455	31.3%
Management Occupations	4,827	8.6%
Sales and Related Occupations	3,466	6.2%
Healthcare Support Occupations	3,349	6.0%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,288	5.9%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,957	5.3%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	2,444	4.4%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	2,177	3.9%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,120	3.8%
<i>Source: Online advertised jobs data in the online data system hosted by Geographic Solutions, Inc. and provided by Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, Oct. 28, 2025.</i>		

Within the **Healthcare Practitioners and Technical** group, the top five specific occupations with the highest existing demand, based on online-advertised job openings data, were: Registered Nurses; Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses; Physicians, All Other; and Radiologic Technologists and Technicians. The top in-demand skills advertised for Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations were customer service, medication administration, critical thinking, providing information, and flexibility.

Within **Management**, the top five occupations with the most existing demand were: General and Operations Managers; All Other Managers; Sales Managers; Medical and Health Services Managers; and Construction Managers. The top skills advertised for these Management Occupations were customer service, problem-solving, attention to detail, organizational skills, and decision-making.

The top five **Sales and Related** occupations with the greatest existing demand are Retail Salespersons; First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; Cashiers; Parts Salespersons; and Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents. The skills most highly sought for Sales and Related openings were customer service, problem solving, attention to detail, working independently, and self-motivation.

The specific **Healthcare Support** occupations with the most job openings advertised were Nursing Assistants, Medical Assistants, Occupational Therapy Assistants, Personal Care Aides, Physical Therapist Assistants, and Home Health Aides. The skills most frequently advertised were recording vital signs, food preparation, collaborative skills, assisting with scheduling, and customer service.

The **Office and Administrative Support** occupations with the greatest current demand are Customer Service Representatives, Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants, Tellers, Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks, and Receptionists and Information Clerks. Top skills advertised in job openings were customer service, attention to detail, problem-solving, organizational skills, and interpersonal skills.

The top five **Transportation and Material Moving** occupations with the most existing demand were:

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Hand Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers; Stockers and Order Fillers; Driver/Sales Workers; and Light Truck Drivers. The skills in most demand, based on advertised job openings, were customer service, attention to detail, working independently, a positive attitude, and standing for long periods.

The top five **Installation, Maintenance and Repair** occupations with the greatest existing demand are Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists; Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers; Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics; Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers; all other General Maintenance and Repair Workers; and First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers. The most in-demand skills are customer service, working independently, preventative maintenance, problem-solving, and attention to detail.

Within the **Food Preparation and Serving** group, workers are most in demand in the occupations of Restaurant Cooks, Fast Food and Counter Workers, First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving, Waiters and Waitresses, and Dishwashers. The most sought-after skills were customer service, food preparation, working independently, a positive attitude, and flexibility.

(ii) **Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.** *Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.*

Although demand projections are not completed by industry, South Dakota employment projections to 2032 show the total number of workers in South Dakota is projected to increase by 39,449 (7.7%), reaching 550,566. Several of the factors that contributed to South Dakota's rapid recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be at play and are expected to help prosperity persist, including consumer demand, e-commerce, population growth, the needs of an aging population, and technological advances.

As shown in the table below, the South Dakota projections include three categories of workers.

South Dakota Industry Projections 2022-2032				
By Industry Division				
Industry Division	2022 Employment	2032 Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total of All Industries	511,117	550,566	39,449	7.7%
Non-agricultural Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers	26,484	28,229	1,745	6.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (Farm Employment)	33,331	34,941	1,610	4.8%
Nonfarm Wage and Salaried Workers (excludes Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers)	451,302	487,396	36,094	8.0%
Source: Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, October 2025.				

The **Nonfarm Wage and Salaried Workers** category consists only of wage and salaried workers covered under the South Dakota Reemployment Assistance program (unemployment insurance) and those who work for non-profit organizations, such as private colleges and religious organizations. Nonfarm wage and salaried workers comprise the largest share (88.3%) of South Dakota's workforce. This group is also projected to have the highest growth rate by 2032 at 8.0%.

The **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting** (Farm Employment) category is expected to grow slightly (4.8%) by 2032. South Dakota's farm employment had been declining since the late 1990s and into the late 2000s, but then steadied and began trending slightly upward.

The final component of the labor force in South Dakota is the **Non-agricultural Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers** category. Self-employed people are individuals who work for profit or fees in their own business, profession, trade, or farm. The smallest portion of South Dakota's labor force (5.5%) is expected to grow at 5.9% by 2032.

Using South Dakota employment projections at the three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) level (subsector level), the following 10 industries are expected to have the greatest actual growth by 2032.

South Dakota Industries with Fastest Projected Growth 2022-2032 (by three-digit NAICS* industry subsector)					
NAICS Code	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
0	Total of All Industries	511,117	550,566	39,449	7.7%
493	Warehousing and Storage	1,224	1,528	304	24.8%
712	Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	611	717	106	17.3%
492	Couriers and Messengers	2,310	2,706	396	17.1%
622	Hospitals	29,195	33,904	4,709	16.1%
541	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	17,217	19,834	2,617	15.2%
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	19,257	22,032	2,775	14.4%
336	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	3,777	4,304	527	14.0%
488	Support Activities for Transportation	1,089	1,224	135	12.4%
326	Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	1,617	1,813	196	12.1%
238	Specialty Trade Contractors	15,537	17,368	1,831	11.8%
423	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	11,077	12,365	1,288	11.6%
Notes:					
*NAICS - North American Industry Classification System					
Data is preliminary and subject to revision.					
Industries with 2022 employment less than 1,000 not included in the calculations.					
May not sum due to rounding and the inclusion of non-publishable industry data in the totals.					
For employment projection methodology, see http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/projections_technical_notes.aspx .					
Source: Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, October 2025					

Businesses in **Warehousing and Storage** operate warehousing and storage facilities for general merchandise, refrigerated goods, and other warehouse products. These fulfillment centers provide facilities for storing goods and preparing them for shipment to consumers. A major factor in this projected growth is demand caused by the continually increasing consumer preference for shopping online.

Having a direct relationship with businesses in the **Couriers and Messengers** subsector. They provide intercity, local, and/or international delivery of parcels and documents. Consumer preferences push demand within this subsector as well. Consumers purchasing items online rather than in a brick-and-mortar store is an example.

Hospitals provide medical, diagnostic, and treatment services and other specialized accommodations to inpatients. Hospitals may also provide outpatient services as a secondary activity. The demand for hospital workers is ever-increasing as the population ages and grows.

South Dakota's **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services** subsector comprises establishments that make available the knowledge and skills of their employees, often on an assignment basis, where an individual or team is responsible for the delivery of services to the client. Several factors are contributing to the need for workers within this subsector, including automation, technological advances, and the need for expertise and consulting. Retailers and fast-food chains are reducing labor costs through automation, such as self-checkouts and online ordering via a phone app or a kiosk in the establishment.

Ambulatory Health Care Services provide care directly or indirectly to ambulatory patients. Inpatient services are not usually included. This subsector and hospitals are directly related, and the same factors, such as an aging population and population growth, primarily drive employment growth. At the four-digit industry level, Home Health Care Services, Outpatient Care Services, and Offices of Other Health Practitioners stand out above the rest in terms of projected growth, all contributing to this subsector's position within the list of fastest-growing industries.

Transportation Equipment Manufacturers produce equipment for transporting people and goods. These businesses use production processes similar to those of other machinery manufacturing establishments, such as bending, forming, welding, machining, and assembling metal or plastic parts into components and finished products. Motor Vehicle Body and Trailer Manufacturing and Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing are the more detailed industries driving expected growth. Consumer demand for products like aerospace parts, motor vehicle parts and accessories, trailers, motorcycles, and boats is projected to increase employment.

South Dakota's **Support Activities for Transportation** subsector provides a wide array of transportation-related services, including air traffic control, marine cargo handling, and motor vehicle towing. There is a direct correlation with Transportation Equipment Manufacturing. The need for higher production output brings a corresponding need to ramp up staffing in these businesses, including related activities.

Businesses in the **Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing** subsector make goods by processing plastic materials and raw rubber. Plastics and rubber are combined in the same sector because plastics are increasingly used as substitutes for rubber; however, the subsector is generally restricted to the production of products made of a single material, either plastics or rubber. Gross sales of rubber and miscellaneous plastic products rose 37.9% from 2020 to 2022, according to the Department of Revenue's Sales and Use Tax Report. Manufacturers will continue to increase production to keep up with increasing demand for products such as foam insulation, plastic bags, plastic pipes, plastic bottles, rubber tires, rubber hoses, and rubber belts.

Specialty Trade Contractors perform a specific construction-related activity (such as preparing a job site, pouring concrete, plumbing, painting, or performing electrical work). Still, they are not responsible for an entire project. The work performed by specialty trade contractors is usually subcontracted from a general contractor or for-sale builder. Specialty trade contractors may also work directly for the property owner. This is especially true in the case of repair work and minor remodeling projects.

Durable Goods Merchant Wholesalers sell capital or durable goods to other businesses. Durable goods are new or used items generally with a normal life expectancy of three years or more. The number of establishments in South Dakota's Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods subsector doubled from 2012 to 2022. Consumer demand plays a significant role in the continued and expected growth. This wholesale subsector encompasses a very broad range of durable goods, ranging from motor vehicles and machinery to furniture and construction materials. As end consumers continue to need

and want these highly varied durable goods, driving demand among middle-level retailers who sell to them, there will remain demand for workers in wholesale establishments.

At the occupational level, projections are developed not only for employment levels but also for worker demand. Expressed in terms of average annual openings projected, the annual demand estimates include the following components:

- Openings created through employment growth in the occupation (the change from 2022 to 2032, averaged over the years in the projections period)
- Openings created by workers who leave the labor force entirely (for such reasons as retirement or death)
- Openings created by workers who leave one occupation for another one

The table below shows the 10 occupations with the greatest projected annual demand to 2032 in South Dakota.

South Dakota Occupations with Highest Projected Demand 2022-2032					
SOC* Code	SOC* Title	2022 Employment	2032 Employment	Numeric Change 2022-2032	Average Annual Openings
00-0000	Total of All Occupations	511,117	550,566	39,449	63,435
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	14,569	16,165	1,596	3,668
41-2011	Cashiers	12,193	12,623	430	2,438
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	21,349	22,751	1,402	2,415
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	13,957	15,047	1,090	2,209
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	9,188	10,377	1,189	1,686
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	9,543	10,442	899	1,481
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	6,333	6,747	414	1,394
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	11,505	11,592	87	1,347
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	7,910	7,863	-47	1,054
29-1141	Registered Nurses	14,586	16,506	1,920	1,028
Notes: *SOC - Standard Occupational Classification Data is preliminary and subject to revision. Occupations with fewer than 30 workers in 2022 not included. For employment projection methodology, see http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/projections_technical_notes.aspx. <i>Source: Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, October 2025</i>					

For WIOA-funded and other workforce development programs, the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation uses an even more comprehensive data set to determine the feasibility of programs for occupational preparation. To help ensure funded programs and projects prepare participants for occupations with a positive return on investment, both projected demand and average wages are considered. To that end, Hot Careers are identified. Hot Careers must meet the following criteria:

1. Have positive projected percent change in employment from 2022 to 2032.

2. Have projected annual openings greater than the average across all occupations (82) for 2022-2032.
3. Have an average/mean wage greater than the median wage across all occupations. The median wage in 2024 was \$45,620.

There are 64 occupations which meet the above criteria. Additionally, DLR identified the Top 30 Careers, those 30 Hot Careers with the greatest projected demand. The table below shows the employment and demand projections data, along with the wage data for the 64 Hot Careers. The first 30 occupations listed are the Top 30 careers.

South Dakota Hot Careers (High-demand, High-wage Occupations)			
SOC* Code	SOC* Title	Average Annual Openings 2022-2032	Average Annual Wage 2024
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,028	\$ 72,210
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	897	\$ 58,150
47-2031	Carpenters	595	\$ 48,090
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	573	\$ 78,250
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	560	\$ 81,670
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	479	\$ 59,180
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	387	\$ 49,280
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	386	\$150,020
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	344	\$ 47,990
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	333	\$ 50,360
13-1111	Management Analysts	323	\$ 86,410
47-2111	Electricians	279	\$ 57,660
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	259	\$ 77,300
41-2022	Parts Salespersons	247	\$ 46,540
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	243	\$ 51,770
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	238	\$ 46,910
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	234	\$ 54,000
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	232	\$ 48,310
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	228	\$ 76,910
11-9051	Food Service Managers	224	\$ 62,090
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	199	\$ 47,560
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	195	\$ 56,110
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	193	\$ 55,090
41-4011	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	189	\$132,270
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	188	\$ 46,340
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	187	\$ 72,660
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	186	\$ 51,230
21-2011	Clergy	183	\$ 57,200
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	178	\$ 55,890
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	170	\$ 69,160
15-1252	Software Developers	167	\$ 93,390
31-9091	Dental Assistants	164	\$ 49,080
53-1047	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation & Material Moving Workers	163	\$ 66,360
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	160	\$ 51,240
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	158	\$ 62,940
51-9124	Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	154	\$ 49,570
13-2072	Loan Officers	152	\$ 83,250
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	148	\$ 46,980
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	148	\$ 49,090
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	148	\$ 53,780
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	143	\$ 60,500
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	143	\$ 65,020
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	138	\$ 69,140
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	135	\$ 89,020
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	126	\$ 50,960
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	124	\$ 59,070
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	122	\$ 80,970
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	121	\$ 74,480
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	119	\$ 47,750
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	114	\$ 49,070
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	113	\$ 62,420
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	106	\$128,110
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	103	\$ 45,880
41-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	102	\$119,900
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	101	\$ 58,220
17-2051	Civil Engineers	101	\$ 96,590
13-1020	Buyers and Purchasing Agents	99	\$ 74,220
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists	97	\$ 53,240
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	96	\$ 46,490
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	92	\$122,300
51-4041	Machinists	91	\$ 50,110
47-2221	Structural Iron and Steel Workers	90	\$ 55,070
13-1041	Compliance Officers	88	\$ 78,950
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators	86	\$ 56,830

Source: Labor Market Information Center, SD Department of Labor and Regulation, October 2025

- (iii) **Employers' Employment Needs.** *About 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.*

Looking at **employers' needs** related to the existing demand covered in item I above, the following job skills were most often mentioned in job openings advertised online within the prior six months:

- Customer service (referenced in 45,106 openings)
- Food preparation (referenced in 3,683 openings)
- Preventive maintenance (referenced in 3,419 openings)
- Welding (referenced in 3,404 openings)
- Record keeping (referenced in 2,996 openings)

Tools and technology most often mentioned in job openings advertised online for the same period were:

- Microsoft (MS) Office (referenced in 12,966 openings)
- Forklift (referenced in 6,203 openings)
- Personal protective equipment (referenced in 6,129 openings)
- Motor vehicles (referenced in 4,966 openings)
- Cash Register (referenced in 4,813 openings)

Advertised **job certifications** most frequently mentioned in job openings advertised online for the prior six months were:

- Registered Nurse (RN) (referenced in 23,486 openings)
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL) (referenced in 8,877 openings)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) (referenced in 8,769 openings)
- Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification (referenced in 8,725 openings)
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification (ACLS) (referenced in 8,153 openings)

To delve more deeply into employers' employment needs (knowledge, skills and abilities, and licensing/certification requirements of occupations) in emerging-demand industry sectors and occupations, Occupational Profiles were developed for each of the 64 Hot Careers. Each Occupational Profile, available at the link below, provides detailed information on the occupation, such as knowledge, skill and ability requirements (from O*Net Online) as well as licensing or certification requirements specific to South Dakota. The Profiles are available from https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/hot_careers_occupational_profiles.aspx. Furthermore, the most current information available on employer needs and worker supply is available at any point in time within the virtual labor market data system, through links to each Hot Career listed at https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/hot_careers_virtual_lmd_links.aspx. On the page https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/hot_careers_current_openings.aspx, each Hot Career is also linked directly to current job openings in the virtual system, where information on job requirements is included.

- (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.*

South Dakota's population increased to nearly 925,000 in 2024, an increase of 0.7% from 2023. Adults aged 65 and over had the largest increase over the year at 2.9%, followed by individuals 18 to 24 years at 1.6%. South Dakota's median age in 2024 was 39.1 years. Growth over the last decade (2014 to 2024) was steady at 9.1%, exceeding the U.S. population growth of 6.5% over the same period.

South Dakota's two Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Rapid City and Sioux Falls, are the driving force behind the steady population growth. The population of these two areas accounts for 49.5% of our total population. Sioux Falls is our largest MSA with a population of 298,700 in 2024. Over the last 10 years, Sioux Falls and Rapid City have increased their populations by 20.4% and 11.3%, respectively. *(Source of population data: population estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.)*

The largest percent of the state's population by race is comprised of White residents (86.8%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Natives (10.1%). Regarding ethnicity, 4.9% of South Dakota's population is Hispanic or Latino, a decrease from 5.1% in 2023. *(Source: 2024 American Community Survey (ACS), U.S. Census Bureau)*

Data on the linguistics of our state population show a large majority of state residents (93.0%) speak only English. Approximately 61,400 residents can speak another language, with Spanish being the most widely used after English at 2.8%. Nearly 9,700 (1.1%) struggle with language barriers, speaking English 'not well' or 'not well at all'. *(Source: 2024 American Community Survey (ACS), U.S. Census Bureau)*

South Dakota's labor force participation rate was 69.5% in 2024, meaning nearly 70% of all (non-institutionalized) residents age 16 years and older were in the labor force, either working or looking for work. This compares to a 2024 national average of 62.6%. Historically, South Dakota has consistently had a higher labor force participation rate than the nation as a whole. In fact, South Dakota had the third-highest rate nationally in 2024. Youth in South Dakota were also very active labor force participants. In 2024, 64.5% of the state's young population (age 16-24 years) were in the labor force, compared to the national rate of 55.9%. At the other end of the age spectrum, South Dakota's labor force participation rate for those 65 and older was 28.7%, compared to the national average of 19.5%. *(Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS))*

South Dakota's labor force (including the employed and unemployed) continued to grow through 2024, indicating a healthy labor market. The unemployed includes not only those who have lost a job but those who have quit their jobs to look for other employment, workers whose temporary jobs have ended, individuals looking for their first job, and experienced workers looking for employment after an absence from the labor force (for example, stay-at-home parents who return to the labor force after their children have entered school). South Dakota's unemployment rate has been below 2.1% since November 2021, and the number of unemployed has been below 10,000. The number of unemployed dropped below 8,500 from January 2024 to March 2024, resulting in a record-low unemployment rate of 1.7%. The unemployment rate has increased slightly since, but has remained very low. South Dakota's average unemployment rate in 2024 was 1.8%, while the U.S. unemployment rate was 4.0%.

The number of people employed in South Dakota has continued its upward trend since recovering from the pandemic in August 2020. South Dakota's employment increased by 6,400 or 1.3% in 2024, while U.S. employment increased by 0.2% over the same time period.

According to 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 13.8% of South Dakota's population has a disability. For the 18-64 age group, it is 11.5%. The age group with the highest rate of disability is 65 years and older at 31.7%, which correlates with disabilities often occurring as people age, including hearing, vision, and self-care disabilities.

For the core of the labor force (ages 18 to 64 years), the highest percent of disabilities (5.6%) is for those with a cognitive disability, defined by the ACS as 'existing when a person has a condition lasting six months or more that results in difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating. Individuals with such limitations are often defined as having mild traumatic brain injury (TBI). People with mild TBI often retain the ability to work competitively. Such individuals, however, typically earn less when employed year-round full-time than do people without disability and have lower levels of employment.' The second-highest rate (4.1%) is for ambulatory disability, which is difficulty walking or climbing

stairs. The rate of disabilities by race is highest for the American Indians and Alaskan Natives (16.0%), followed by the white race at 14.0%. The percentage of women with disabilities, 14.7%, is higher than for men at 13.0%.

South Dakota Population with Disabilities (Population 18 to 64 years)		
	Population	Percent
Total	59,742	11.5%
With a hearing difficulty	11,362	2.2%
With a vision difficulty	10,588	2.0%
With a cognitive difficulty	29,319	5.6%
With an ambulatory difficulty	21,555	4.1%
With a self-care difficulty	7,944	1.5%
With an independent living difficulty	18,785	3.6%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey</i>		

The percentage of families in South Dakota with incomes below the poverty level decreased slightly, from 1.0% in 2023 to 0.9% in 2024. The percentage of South Dakota families in poverty is consistently below the national rate. Nationally, the percentage of all families in poverty decreased by 0.3% to 8.5%, which is 0.9 percentage points higher than South Dakota's 6.6%. The percent of 'all people' in the U.S. and South Dakota with incomes below the poverty threshold was 12.1% and 10.4%, respectively, in 2024.

South Dakota Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined			
	Population	Population Below Poverty Level	Percent of Population Below Poverty Level
Total	895,821	93,272	10.4%
Under 5 years	52,825	5,348	10.1%
5 to 17 years	160,734	18,587	11.6%
18 to 64 years	514,398	53,013	10.3%
65 years and over	167,864	16,324	9.7%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey</i>			

According to the 2024 American Community Survey, there are 52,000 South Dakota veterans, which is 7.4% of the state's 703,500 civilian population aged 18 and over. The largest veteran population is from the two Gulf War eras, accounting for 59.9% of the veteran population in South Dakota and of the veteran demographic 18 and older.

In the prior 12 months, 6.5% of veterans in South Dakota had income below the poverty level, which is much lower than the non-veteran estimate of 10.5%.

Of the 52,000 veterans in the state in 2024, 87.1% are White, 4.0% are American Indian and Alaska Native, and 3.0% are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any race). Males account for 89.1%, while females account for 10.9%.

There are 26,700 veterans ages 18-64 in South Dakota's labor force, making up 5.1% of the total civilian labor force of 527,600 in 2024. Veterans' labor force participation is slightly lower than that of the non-veteran population, at 83.4% and 83.9%, respectively.

The unemployment rate for veterans aged 18 to 64 in 2024 was 3.5%, which is 0.6 percentage points higher than the state's unemployment rate of 2.9%.

South Dakota veterans 25 years and over are well educated, with 36.7% having some college or an associate degree and 34.2% having a bachelor's degree or higher.

(ii) **Labor Market Trends.** *Provide an analysis of key labor market trends across existing industries and occupations.*

Existing industry and occupational trends were addressed to some degree above in section a1Ai, because current (or recent) employment levels provide the base for employment and demand projections. For a more complete look at existing industry trends, data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is a good source. The table below shows South Dakota employment levels by industry for 2024, compared with 2023.

The following industries showed the most absolute growth in employment over the last year.

- Education and Health Services
- Construction
- Leisure and Hospitality
- Trade, Transportation and Utilities

Growth in **Educational and Health Services** in 2024 was concentrated in Health Care and Social Assistance, while the Educational Services sector lost workers. In fact, Health Care and Social Assistance has the most workers and pays the most total wages in South Dakota. The most significant employment growth was in Hospitals (648, 2.3%), Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (599, 5.1%) and Ambulatory Health Care Services (546, 2.8%). South Dakota's population growth, the aging of our population, and medical advancements all come into play, spurring this growth.

South Dakota's **Construction** industry added 1,072 workers (3.8%) during 2024. All three subsectors gained employment during the year:

- Construction of Buildings (287, 4.1%)
- Heavy and Civil Engineering (77, 1.7%)
- Specialty Trade Contractors (708, 4.2%)

South Dakota's Construction sector continues to illustrate economic expansion and population growth. Evidence can be found in related data for the largest cities. According to the City of Sioux Falls, its population has increased by 4,280 residents (2.5%) over the last five years, with ten-year growth of 3,310 (2.0%). Another economic indicator closely associated with the Construction industry is building permits. City of Rapid City budget proposals showed the number of building permits in 2024 was 975, with a valuation of \$181.9 million. The number of permits estimated for 2025 is 1,235, with a valuation of \$155.8 million.

The **Leisure and Hospitality Services** super sector added 970 workers from 2023 to 2024, with a growth rate of 2.0%. The biggest contributors were Eating and Drinking Places with a growth of 788 (2.3%) and Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation, which gained 288 workers (5.2%). Full-service restaurants continue to expand and open, requiring additional workers on a yearly basis. Limited-service restaurants are edging forward as well. Consumers relish stores that offer specialized sandwiches, bagels, coffees, and ice cream for their taste buds. The types of Amusement and Recreation facilities that grew in 2024 were golf courses, ski facilities, fitness centers, and bowling alleys.

South Dakota's **Trade, Transportation and Utilities** super sector grew by 905 (1.0%) from 2023 to 2024. Merchant Wholesalers of Durable Goods added 192 workers (1.7% growth), with the larger sector, Retail Trade, contributing the

most to the super sector’s growth, adding 294 workers (0.5%) during 2024. Durable goods are new or used items with a normal life expectancy of three years or more. They include construction equipment, farm machinery, furniture, computer equipment, jewelry, and household appliances.

Retail Trade employment numbers are higher in part because of the prevalence of part-time workers, with many workers arranging their schedules around school, family needs, or another job. In other words, it may take two or more employees in this industry to meet the needs of one position.

Population growth and other sources of increased consumer demand also impact worker levels in Retail Trade. Retailers have expanded their footprint in the state's growing communities. Many establishments have increased their social media presence and enhanced their offerings to improve consumer convenience (such as online ordering with in-store or curbside pickup or delivery) to drive consumer demand. When consumer spending increases, the demand for retail goods also grows, leading to more jobs in this sector.

(iii) **Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce.** *Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.*

As shown in the table below, South Dakota is well educated, with the largest portion having a bachelor’s degree or higher. Unemployment rates by educational attainment level indicate the highest unemployment rates in South Dakota correlate with residents who have an educational attainment level of ‘less than a high school diploma’ (8.4%). In contrast, the lowest unemployment rate is among residents with an educational attainment level of ‘bachelor’s degree and higher’ (0.5%). Higher levels of educational attainment also correlate with higher earnings levels, as detailed below.

South Dakota Employment Status of the Civilian Population 25 Years and Over by Educational Attainment							
		Civilian Labor Force		Employment		Unemployment	
	Population*	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate
Less than a High school diploma	30,800	17,500	56.7%	16,500	53.7%	1,000	5.5%
High school graduates, no college 1	175,500	112,200	63.9%	110,300	62.9%	1,900	1.7%
Some college or associate degree	183,900	130,900	71.2%	129,400	70.4%	1,500	1.1%
Bachelor's degree and higher 2	221,800	169,700	76.5%	167,800	75.7%	1,900	1.1%
1 Includes persons with a high school diploma or equivalent							
2 Includes person with bachelor's, master's, professional and doctoral degrees							
*Non-institutionalized population.							
Note: Subject to high rates of variability; January 2024 - December 2024 reference period.							
Source: Special tabulations of unpublished Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics							

As the table on the following page shows, there is a strong correlation between the level of earnings and educational level. Median earnings in South Dakota increase with the level of education received. It clearly pays to stay in school, with earnings increasing by at least 15% for each level of education earned. The value of completing high school for females is the greatest earnings boost, with median earnings 58.2% higher for those who graduated from high school or completed an equivalency than for those who did not. The greatest value for males comes from completing some college or earning an associate degree, with 28.5% higher earnings.

South Dakota Median Earnings by Educational Level (of population 25 years and older in the past 12 months, in 2024 inflation-adjusted dollars)						
		Percent Increase Over Prior Level		Percent Increase Over Prior Level		Percent Increase Over Prior Level
	Total		Male		Female	
Total population 25 years and over with earnings	\$50,954		\$56,615		\$45,191	
Less than high school graduate	\$35,330		\$40,136		\$21,859	
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$40,822	15.5%	\$45,696	13.9%	\$34,587	58.2%
Some college or associate's degree	\$49,698	21.7%	\$58,742	28.5%	\$41,001	18.5%
Bachelor's degree	\$58,207	17.1%	\$70,370	19.8%	\$51,569	25.8%
Graduate or professional degree	\$71,130	22.2%	\$76,030	8.0%	\$67,599	31.1%
<i>American Community Survey one-year estimates for 2024, U.S. Census Bureau</i>						

Occupational employment and demand projections were tabulated by the level of education recommended for individual occupations for analysis of future educational needs of South Dakotans. The table shows the greatest demand will continue to be in lower-skilled occupations for which minimal education is required. But better-paying jobs with more desirable working conditions (work settings, hours, etc.) and the offering of benefits will be in demand as well, offering greater opportunities for a sustainable lifestyle.

South Dakota Occupational Employment and Demand Projections 2020-2030 Summed by Level of Education Recommended						
South Dakota Educational Category	Number of Workers in 2020	2020 Workers in Category as a Percent of Total Workers	Number of Workers in 2030	2030 Workers in Category as a Percent of Total Workers	Total Annual Openings	Total Openings in Category as a Percent of Total Workers
Total, all occupations	483,893	100.0%	525,014	100.0%	59,880	100.0%
Less than high school	113,118	23.4%	123,712	23.6%	19,200	32.1%
High school diploma or equivalent	192,255	39.7%	203,846	38.8%	23,084	38.6%
Sum of high school or less	305,373	63.1%	327,558	62.4%	42,284	70.6%
Some postsecondary education	60,671	12.5%	66,484	12.7%	6,806	11.4%
Associate degree	15,500	3.2%	17,444	3.3%	1,565	2.6%
Bachelor's degree	85,863	17.7%	94,976	18.1%	7,918	13.3%
Master's degree	6,846	1.4%	7,909	1.5%	649	1.1%
Doctoral or professional degree	9,640	2.0%	10,643	2.0%	618	1.1%
Sum of bachelor's degree or higher	102,349	21.2%	113,528	21.6%	9,185	15.4%
Sum of education beyond high school	178,520	36.9%	197,456	37.6%	17,556	29.4%
Source: South Dakota 2020 to 2030 occupational employment and demand projections, with data for detailed occupations summed by level of education recommended, Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, September 2023.						

- (iv) **Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion.** Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

The continuation of educational and training programs focused on specific in-demand career fields (including those identified above as Hot Careers) will remain vital to South Dakota's economic success. The recent expansion of South Dakota's successful registered apprenticeship programs through Start Today will be more important than ever in helping prepare South Dakotans with the education and skill sets needed for high-demand, high-wage occupations.

- (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 required⁴ and optional one-stop delivery system partners.⁵

Education and training activities provided by workforce partners are summarized in the One-Stop Partner Programs and Services for Individuals Form 3 and provided to all Wagner-Peyser participants during their orientation and intake to the One-Stop System. In addition, as a customer is enrolled in a WIOA Title I program, a list of Financial Services Form 4 is

reviewed to give them an idea of the services available, increasing the likelihood they will talk to their Employment Specialist if a need arises.

- **WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth** programs offer Occupational Skills Training (OST) with an approved provider on the **Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)** in a program of study that can be completed in two years, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeship programs with U.S. DOL, secondary education through WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy or through the K-12 public school system. These programs offer basic and individualized career services, including work experiences, mock interviews, leadership development opportunities, job shadows, digital literacy skills development, financial literacy, soft skills training, and National Career Readiness Certificates® (NCRC™). Title I is administered by DLR, with services provided by DLR staff in Job Service Offices.
- **WIOA Title II AEL** programs in South Dakota offer classes including literacy and numeracy development, workforce preparation, integrated education and training, high school equivalency test preparation, English Language acquisition, family literacy, basic skills assessment, and integrated English literacy and civics education. DLR administers Title II with services offered through provider agreements.
- **WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser** offers basic and individualized career services specifically to include job search and foundational skills virtual workshops, and financial literacy virtual workshops offered through a partnership. In addition, self-directed online curriculum and eLearning courses are available, including WorkKeys® Curriculum™ for workplace skills, Alison eLearning courses for career development, Big Interview for interview and resume development, Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere for workplace skills, Northstar for digital literacy skills, and the Google Career Certificate program. The Title III program also offers career fairs, including a virtual platform, to both businesses and job seekers. Title III is administered by DLR, with services provided by DLR staff in Job Service Offices.
- **WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation** offers situational assessments, vocational counseling, paid work experiences, tuition assistance for post-secondary education, Social Security Administration benefits guidance, assistive technology, transition services for young adults, disability specific services, job placement services, job coaching, supported employment services, and post-employment services. DHS administers Title IV with services offered by DHS and through provider agreements.
- **Boxelder Job Corps**, located in Nemo, South Dakota, offers career assessments, literacy and numeracy skill development, secondary education programming, career and technical training, career success standards, English language learning, and work-based learning. The U.S. Forest Service administers services offered at the Job Corps campus.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** offers individualized case management paired with workforce services to coach customers in overcoming barriers, obtaining education and training, and securing sustainable employment. TANF is administered by the South Dakota Department of Social Services, which partners with DLR to offer workforce services.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)** offers participants intensive case management along with assistance in overcoming barriers and gaining skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain gainful employment to achieve stability and self-sufficiency. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including SNAP E&T, is administered by the South Dakota Department of Social Services, which partners with DLR to offer workforce services.
- The **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** offers work experience opportunities at non-profit community work sites. They also offer specialized skills training. The state program is administered by DLR, with services provided by DLR staff in Job Service Offices.
- **Reemployment Services (RES)** provides case management, eligibility assessment, development of an individualized employment plan, and connections to additional workforce programs and services to dislocated workers receiving reemployment assistance benefits. The DLR administers the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program through a partnership between the Field Operations, Reemployment Assistance, and Workforce Development Divisions. Services are provided by staff in the Job Service Offices.
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** As of July 2022, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) has not been reauthorized. While states are encouraged to submit petitions if a layoff or closure occurs, new petitions are not

being reviewed by the U.S. DOL for approval. Those who were impacted by previous layoffs that have approved petitions may continue to receive services, including training, through the TAA program or limited services through the Dislocated Worker Program. More information is available in Section VI.(a)(2) of this State Plan.

- **Rapid Response** When DLR is informed of a layoff, Job Service Office staff reach out to the business within two business days to offer a rapid response, allowing impacted employees to learn of services to assist them in reskilling and regaining employment. To expand access to and awareness of available services, DLR implemented monthly virtual rapid-response events. These events can be done more frequently if a need presents itself, with a goal to reach those employees who may not have had the opportunity to attend an event, the employer did not wish to have a rapid response event, or we learned of the closure after employees are already laid off, with no further method of contact. DLR offers Rapid Response services through a partnership between the Field Operation, Reemployment Assistance, and Workforce Development Divisions.
- The **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** program in South Dakota provides training opportunities for both secondary and post-secondary students. This includes technical skills training programs, tutoring, success coaching, accommodations for students with disabilities, credit-by-exam opportunities, testing and certification centers, assisting students who are veterans, offering job fairs, career counseling and job search assistance, scholarships, corporate education, workforce recruitment, and Ed2Go. The CTE program is administered through the Department of Education and the Board of Technical Education.
- The **Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)** provides individualized career and training services to eligible individuals, veterans, and eligible spouses with a significant barrier to employment, as well as other authorized populations, and employment outreach to advocate for the hiring of veterans. The JVSG is administered by the DLR, which has DLR staff in Consolidated Positions offering these services to assist eligible individuals and businesses.
- While specific services vary, many of the **Native American Programs** in South Dakota offer paid Work Experiences, post-secondary opportunities, and support services to their participants.
- The **National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)** offers OST and OJT opportunities and support 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.*

In May of 2022, DLR hosted the first WIOA Partner Symposium. Members representing all core programs and required partners were in attendance to hear about Growth and Change in South Dakota's Labor Market and to use what we have learned from 2020 to provide foresight into the future. In addition, they had an opportunity to hear how employers are creatively hiring and retaining a workforce in a tight labor market. In 2023, this group met again. Prior to the meeting, a survey was completed in advance to gain insights into what this group felt were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, untapped potential, and technology and training needs of the workforce system in South Dakota. In addition, respondents provided feedback on what success looks like. Feedback from these now annual meetings has contributed to the information in this plan. The main takeaway from the gathered information is that success for the workforce system in South Dakota involves collaborative partnerships working cohesively.

As we start looking ahead to the 2028 plan, DLR anticipates a similar strategy to gather stakeholder input. In addition, an employer survey will be conducted to better understand their workforce needs.

Strengths

Themes surrounding strengths include South Dakota's small size, which easily allows for partnerships, collaboration, communication, and synergy in understanding needs and priorities. Partners focus on what can be accomplished now and within the constraints we have, while keeping an eye on future innovations and projects. Communicating with partners allows for adjustment until a model is established that works for all involved, including customers.

These partners gather at the state level through the annual Governor's Office of Economic Development conference, as well as many smaller partner meetings based on existing projects and priorities. In addition, partners meet through Integrated Resource Teams, where the customers served by all parties are present. Locally, meetings take place quarterly to share about current efforts, services, changes and opportunities to streamline or establish a strategic service model to improve outcomes.

The majority of workforce programs are offered through the American Job Centers or Job Service Offices located throughout the state, providing customers with a one-stop system for workforce services. For those programs and services not offered through the Job Service Offices, DLR has established direct referral links.

Furthermore, the workforce partners involved in developing this plan are committed to establishing creative solutions to build a stronger tomorrow. These dedicated individuals are the cornerstone of workforce success in our state.

Challenges

In addition to being a strength, small size was also identified as a challenge. While proud of our conservative nature, our small size correlates to limited resources and capacity. This includes financial resources, human capacity, and the ability to capitalize on opportunities. Single-area states have the same expenses to operate management information systems, perform evaluations, collect data and submit reports as larger states, but receive smaller allocations with the same requirements. Being stretched thin makes it challenging to apply for competitive funding and innovate effectively. Rather than embracing new resources for our customers, members have change fatigue and prefer to stick with what they know and are comfortable with. While human capacity is limited and team members are pulled in many directions, it is difficult to coordinate efforts for the entire system. As a result, efforts are not always strategically prioritizing the same project or effort at the same time.

Additionally, the six WIOA core programs operate on three different management information systems. Technology has a significant impact on a budget in a small state like South Dakota. Therefore, it is not feasible to abandon individual systems and develop a single system. For this reason, information sharing is challenging and impacts reporting, performance, and case management.

There are many rural areas in South Dakota without Internet access or proximity to DLR Job Service Offices. Despite increasing virtual services, there are many locations in South Dakota lacking network access. In addition, many of our priority populations are those who generally lack the hardware to connect virtually or the digital literacy skills to succeed in a virtual environment. While continual growth and improvement are needed, the workforce system recognizes the need to embrace technological changes that are impacting how our customers interact with it. They also recognize the balance between improving digital access while not ostracizing those who do not have the skills or resources to interact in a virtual environment.

While South Dakota has a low unemployment rate, many rural communities have high unemployment and a disengaged workforce. These areas typically lack service providers and employment opportunities.

Another challenge identified is the duplication of program requirements, which creates barriers for those most in need of services.

Opportunities

Opportunities identified include continuing to build strategic partnerships, joint training, and collaborative opportunities among partners in the workforce system, highlighting successes, continuing expansion of virtual accessibility while maintaining traditional face-to-face offerings, creating services to engage untapped labor pools, including English Language Learners and older workers, utilizing longitudinal data, and increasing services to rural

communities and businesses. The development of strategic partnerships is essential to improve childcare and housing resources for customers.

While facing record-low unemployment, businesses are interested in identifying unique opportunities to recruit and retain a workforce. Many businesses are seeking Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, enabling them to train a workforce to meet their needs and for employees to train on the job while improving their knowledge. Businesses are also interested in working with typically untapped pools of people, including justice-impacted individuals, individuals with disabilities, youth, and English Language Learners. This creates opportunities for many customers served through the workforce system.

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

Capacity

South Dakota is small, but mighty. We work smart and collaboratively to capitalize on cost-sharing opportunities. Each partner contributes, as they are able, to the success of our customers and the workforce.

As a result of rising costs and stagnant budgets, DLR saw a 1/3 reduction in staff at the American Job Center during Program Year 2023. In addition, while 14 American Job Centers previously offered services throughout the state, four offices closed permanently, and five others are available by appointment only. In addition, the staffing structure was adjusted to a statewide model based on the customers served and the funding to support them. This has allowed our staff to focus on improving confidence, offering service models for customers, and adapting more rapidly.

Recognizing we live in a virtual world and foot traffic in the Job Service Offices continues to dwindle, we have adjusted to strategic partnerships and scheduled appointments, allowing team members to meet customers where they are while reducing the need to maintain offices waiting for customers to arrive.

DLR will continue to build upon a strong foundation of policies and procedures, improve our virtual accessibility, and evaluate how customers access services, prioritizing those who meet statutory priority groups and are working with partner agencies who can offer cost-sharing models.

The administrative burden of WIOA continues to increase, which has increased the costs of operating our management information system, SDWORKS, and staff time to gather data, meet reporting requirements, evaluate programs, validate data, and complete necessary paperwork. DLR has established a Technology Development Team focused on SDWORKS functionality. In addition, a Data, Reporting, and Evaluation team in the Workforce Development Division has been created, allowing the agency to better understand the data to make data-driven decisions related to service delivery. In addition to SDWORKS, DLR has invested in a WIOA Title I and Title III data system, allowing our team to access, compare, and provide data in a meaningful way. We have hopes to incorporate other program data as resources allow.

DLR has established a policy manual that empowers staff to make decisions within these parameters to best help their customers. While this is a continual and time-intensive process, it is essential to maintain fair practices. The workforce manual is made available to the public at https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/wioa/manual.aspx

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

(1) **Vision.** *Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.*

The **vision** of the State of South Dakota workforce system is to collaborate among government, education, business, and community to develop a skilled workforce that will enable employers in South Dakota to expand business when opportunities arise.

To build a stronger economy, South Dakota needs businesses to thrive. South Dakota offers a welcoming environment for individuals looking to start a business. However, to thrive, these businesses need a talented pool of individuals to build their workforce. With a low unemployment rate and a high workforce participation rate, it is essential we tap into everyone's abilities to contribute wherever they are able. Meeting people where they're at and creating career pathways that allow for self-sufficiency and economic growth are where the workforce system shines. However, efforts must be intentional and coordinated.

- (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 employment¹ and other populations.²
- (B) **Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.**

Goal 1: Prepare **residents of South Dakota** to make **informed decisions and support** them at any point during their career pathway. This includes individuals with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3(24).

Areas of Priority as identified by the Workforce Development Council:

This goal focuses on engaging disengaged individuals, including justice-involved populations, youth and older workers, English learners, including refugees and immigrants, Veterans, and individuals with disabilities. The goal is to increase credential attainment, such as GED® or other certifications, and improve digital access and equity while ensuring inclusivity.

Goal 2: Partner with **businesses** to discover **opportunities** and identify **solutions** to address workforce needs.

Areas of Priority as identified by the Workforce Development Council:

Collaborate with businesses to identify skill gaps, offer training for incumbent workers, and explore innovative strategies like automation. The goal is to meet the workforce needs of South Dakota's businesses effectively.

Goal 3: Engage a **system of continuous improvement** to ensure the **alignment of workforce services**.

Areas of Priority as identified by the Workforce Development Council:

This goal highlights the importance of continuous improvement by coordinating and collaborating with partner agencies and community partners. Addressing barriers to workforce success, such as housing and childcare, is a key aspect. Establishing metrics to measure progress and demonstrate success is also emphasized.

- (3) **Performance Goals.** Using the table provided in 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.)

¹ 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. 3514); 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.

² Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

- (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.*

Performance Goals

DLR has implemented a quarterly data validation review, bi-annual active file review, and annual program review as outlined in the Oversight and Monitoring Policy 6.7. This effort is led by DLR's Data Team and involves various staff from the Job Service Offices and Workforce Development Team. This allows for improved data integrity and staff training. In addition, the DLR Workforce Development Team completes a comprehensive review of each Job Service Office once every three years. This review incorporates a One-Stop Certification review that follows the One-Stop System Policy 3.2, Americans with Disabilities Act, Equal Opportunity, and workforce program compliance and effectiveness. Upon completion of the review, a letter identifying findings with required actions, areas of concern with suggested actions, and promising practices is sent to the One-Stop Operator and Job Service Office manager. Upon satisfactory compliance with the findings, the Workforce Development Council seeks a four-year certification.

In addition to these formal reviews, the data team completes quarterly reviews of formal and informal performance indicators. The data team reviews the Quarter Performance Reports (QPRs) to ensure interfaces are functioning correctly, to provide program specialists with areas for improvement, and to identify a series of files that may need further review by program managers.

Assessment

As identified in the Customer Satisfaction Survey Policy 6.6, DLR seeks customer feedback from both job seekers and businesses through a Microsoft Form sent via email quarterly. Feedback from these surveys is shared directly with the One-Stop Operator, Job Service Managers, and the policy team so staff can be recognized for accomplishments or adjustments can be made as needed. With a low response rate, the agency is identifying additional opportunities to gather customer feedback.

The Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs have a continuous evaluation loop that includes case file reviews, identification of training needs, policy development and refinement, and ongoing meetings with supervisors to learn about emerging issues. Assessment also includes monitoring satisfaction survey results and performance measures to further align programs to accomplish state strategies.

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) drives continuous improvement through its Optimize DLR Culture, which encourages innovative ideas and open communication across DLR. This culture is based on actively seeking out innovative process improvement suggestions from all levels and promoting open communication and strong camaraderie between Field Operations and Workforce Services. This commitment is reflected in both strategic planning and operational practice, with a focus on collaboration, innovation, and data-driven decision-making.

Key initiatives include the Strategic Partner Referral Form, which formalizes and streamlines referrals for greater operational efficiency, and the Assessment for Businesses Resource, which gathers employer data to inform targeted workforce programs. DLR regularly reviews data integrity and program effectiveness through quarterly validations, bi-annual file reviews, and comprehensive office assessments. Customer feedback is systematically collected and used to refine services, while ongoing projects, such as consolidating SDWORKS guides, evolving service delivery models, and enhancing apprenticeship strategies, ensure DLR adapts to changing needs. These efforts collectively strengthen service alignment and support better outcomes for businesses and job seekers statewide.

(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 in WIOA section 3(7) and includes registered apprenticeship. "In-demand industry sector or occupation" is defined at WIOA section 3(23).

Industry Led Workforce Solutions

In recent years, the workforce system in South Dakota has worked to adjust our model of serving businesses. Rather than sharing our services, programs, and government-speak, it is important to build relationships with businesses to learn about their business models, goals, and needs. If the workforce system has services to assist the business with its needs, team members develop a plan with the business and assist with implementing these services. If the workforce system does not have the applicable services, the business is connected to other resources in the state to help meet their needs. In addition, this information can assist in the development of meaningful workforce training programs. In the spring of 2024, DLR implemented a statewide Business Services team. Members of this team will have the ability to focus on sectors in high-demand industries, learning about their business and workforce needs to help inform the workforce system. Integrated with the Business Services team are the JVSG team who is focused on the hiring of Veterans, the Education & Industry Integration Coordinator focused on connecting businesses to schools and students, the Registered Apprenticeship team who assists with the development and maintenance of registered apprenticeship programs, Rehabilitation Services who specializes in assisting individuals with disabilities, and the Governor's Office of Economic Development to offer comprehensive services to businesses in our state.

The workforce system continues to support businesses with recruitment resources such as organizing virtual jobs fairs; training for their workforce, including work experiences, on-the-job training, and registered apprenticeships; retention through mentoring resources and access to training for their employees, such as soft skills, financial literacy, and digital literacy; and support through workforce knowledge series educational webinars.

To target services, DLR will launch an annual survey of employers offering insight into their training and workforce needs. In the future, we hope to make this a comprehensive survey with questions or representation from workforce partners. Learning more about employers' needs will help the workforce to establish or support training programs that meet employers' needs.

DLR will continue to serve as a conduit for connecting employers with the K-12 public education system. While financial assistance from the Department of Education for the Career Ready Advisors has been eliminated, DLR continues to support one position focused on these efforts. This Education and Industry Integration Coordinator position assists employers looking to connect with their future workforce, while helping educators connect students to career exploration opportunities with businesses. While already higher than the national average, the overarching goal is to increase youth workforce engagement, provide career exploration opportunities that allow students to make informed decisions about their career pathways, and educate students about possibilities right here in South Dakota.

While attempts have been made previously, only to face budget shortfalls, DLR plans to launch an incumbent worker training model. The statewide teams model, paired with strategic partnerships and guardrails to program entry, offers the ability to establish a budget for incumbent workers. These resources help businesses offset employee training expenses to avoid layoffs and improve competitiveness.

Registered apprenticeships are a model that has seen growth in South Dakota over the last decade as an effective tool for workforce recruitment, training, and retention. Recognizing the benefits of flexibility, efficiency, and quality improvement that come with being a State Apprenticeship Agency - including greater state-level control and reduced federal oversight - DLR is interested in pursuing recognition as a State Apprenticeship Agency.

Develop and Expand Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities

DLR has had great success in building and expanding Registered Apprenticeship programs with federal funding since 2016. In 2023, DLR received state funding to support these efforts. This five-year \$13.9 million investment allows DLR to help sponsors, businesses, mentors, and apprentices at a level not previously available.

Registered apprenticeships are a workforce tool bridging the gap between employment and education. SD continues to see growth in these earn-while-you-learn programs and the number of apprentices in the state. DLR looks forward to expanding into new industries, such as childcare, law enforcement, healthcare, and more.

Career Pathways

With low unemployment and high rates of attachment of the labor force in our state, it is essential the workforce system and businesses get creative in engaging populations with higher rates of unemployment, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as those with a disability. Educating businesses about the value individuals with barriers bring to their workforce is key. Offering opportunities to incentivize businesses to hire these individuals and then supporting the business and the individual through the employment and training process improves success. Training programs are developed based on learning about the business's workforce training needs. Strategic partnerships between workforce programs improve the funnel of these target demographics into training programs. Partnerships then allow for the braiding of resources to support these demographics in the targeted training programs. This support may be in the form of mentorship, support services, tuition assistance, etc.

Realizing that it is easier to find a job when you have a job and the best way to learn foundational employment skills is to practice them on the job in a supportive environment, DLR has focused on building partnerships with businesses willing to offer short-term, entry-level work opportunities. These worksites allow participants to practice their skills, build their network, and contribute while a work experience site or employment is secured. This focus has led to an increase in work-based learning offerings by WIOA Title I customers.

Youth Apprenticeship Pathways

In coordination with the Department of Education's Career and Technical Education program, DLR plans to establish a pre-apprenticeship model that will serve both high school students and participants in workforce programs. Through the Pathway Partnership initiative, DLR has seen success in the development of several youth apprenticeships and recognizes the opportunity for additional programs. High school students can participate in registered apprenticeships that offer high school credit, apprenticeship credit, and post-secondary/college credit. Four high school apprenticeship pathways have been established, incentivizing participation and supporting a grow-your-own talent pipeline.

Examples of these efforts include Bear Butte Gardens, which launched a General Farmer Registered Apprenticeship in partnership with Sturgis Brown High School and Lake Area Technical College, allowing students to gain practical

experience and dual enrollment credits. Belle Fourche School District is developing an agriculture-focused apprenticeship for high school students, set to launch in Fall 2025. Dakota State University has expanded its intermediary efforts to include Cyber Security Support Technician apprenticeships for high school youth.

DLR has established a successful career pathway in the teaching industry and looks forward to expanding this model of upskilling incumbent workers, offering training opportunities, allowing others to enter the field, and expanding into additional high-demand industries such as nursing. With a teacher shortage in the state, a partnership among the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Regulation, the Board of Regents, Dakota State University, and Northern State University was created to identify ways to address this need. The South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway (TAP) was formed. This program is designed for paraprofessionals to earn their bachelor's degree while learning and working full-time in a classroom in South Dakota. This pathway is designed to follow a grow-your-own-teacher program model, in which each South Dakota district has the opportunity to support paraprofessionals in their school district as they obtain teacher credentials. When enrolled in the pathway program, paraprofessionals become teacher apprentices while completing coursework until their degree is completed. Through the creation and success of the TAP, a few key initiatives were created to help backfill teacher positions and strengthen the educator pipeline.

One initiative is Foundations for Future Educators (FFE). DLR partnered with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative to offer online paraprofessional training leading to a certificate for workforce program participants. As pre-apprenticeship guidelines are established, this program will provide a smooth transition into teaching-related registered apprenticeship programs, serving as a stepping stone for individuals to enter the education field.

Another initiative, the Paraprofessional Youth Apprenticeship Pathway, launched in Fall 2024, enables high school students to earn college credits and gain paraprofessional experience in their districts. Students work part-time while taking online DSU courses (minimum four credits/year), aiming for a 12-credit Gateway to Teacher Education certification. The program currently has six students actively participating in two school districts; however, it has generated significant interest among school districts statewide, and with continued outreach and partnership development, the number of participating districts and apprentices is expected to increase in future quarters.

Efforts in the state have been made to improve the connection from secondary education to post-secondary education through South Dakota's university system. A partnership between the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE) and the South Dakota Board of Regents (BOR) led to the creation of a one-stop college-preparation information hub in the State, <https://ourdakotadreams.com/>. In 2026, the DOE will offer juniors throughout the state the ACT® as a standardized test. In addition, the BOR recently recognized college-readiness and college-credits based on GED® scores (<https://doe.sd.gov/ged/documents/GED-SDBOR.pdf>) and direct admission to select South Dakota universities based on high school academic achievement. DLR is keeping an eye on the evolution of Workforce Pell implementation, hoping this will be another resource to aid career pathways, credential attainment, and workforce development in the state.

- (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 regarding weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2).

In a virtual world with a tight job market and reduced foot traffic at Job Service Offices, we recognize the need to increase access for customers throughout the state. Historically, DLR has been organized into 14 main offices with regional territories. However, inflation paired with stagnant budgets has created the need to transition toward a statewide model with five comprehensive centers and five affiliate centers. This will allow DLR to provide strategic service delivery models for our customers, capitalize on our staff's expertise, and adapt more quickly. DLR will continue

to build upon a strong foundation of policies and procedures, improve our virtual accessibility, and evaluate how customers access services, prioritizing those who meet statutory priority groups and are working with partner agencies who can offer cost-sharing models.

Expand Workforce Services

In evaluating recent performance outcomes, DLR is seeking a waiver to offer support services through the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker during the follow-up period. With the demographics being served through strategic partnerships and a continual increase in the cost of living, DLR is seeing a need for continued financial services through follow-up to assist customers with essential expenses. The waiver also offers ways to ease the benefits cliff and encourages individuals to stay employed.

To help customers acclimate to an increasingly digital world, DLR offers services virtually. The agency is implementing a new digital literacy platform. Northstar is an assessment-based resource designed to help individuals build and demonstrate essential digital skills required for everyday life, employment, and education through self-directed and instructor-led curriculum. Northstar topics, with corresponding modules, include essential computer skills, essential software skills, and using technology in daily life. In addition, the agency has recently expanded access to the Google Career Certificate program, an online training program that offers professional certificates in fast-growing, high-demand technology fields at no cost to our customers. The agency also offers a variety of learning opportunities, including workshops on soft skills, job search, retention, financial literacy, and more. Customers have access to eLearning courses for career development through Alison, the ability to develop their resume and practice interview skills through the Big Interview platform, which utilizes artificial intelligence, and essential workplace skill development through Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere or ACT® WorkKeys® Curriculum™. The agency offers ACT® WorkKeys® assessments to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC™), demonstrating work readiness to employers. To improve access to these services, DLR offers on-site laptop use and Chromebooks with hotspots that can be checked out to workforce program participants, much like a library book. In 2026, DLR seeks to launch a new website with capabilities above and beyond what is currently available to us.

Establish Strategic Partnerships and Expand Service Delivery Models

South Dakota's small population is prime for strong partnerships and collaborative efforts as described through this plan. Communication will continue to be enhanced through recurring meetings at the state, local, and participant levels. Opportunities to join forces on common goals will remain a priority. These strategic partnerships offer holistic services to customers and are an efficient use of resources. With limited resources, we must be realistic in who we can serve effectively. Partnerships allow the agency to spend more time providing services and less time on outreach that is not always fruitful. In addition, these partnerships create cost-shared opportunities that provide holistic services to customers engaged in the workforce system.

In addition to creating strategic partnerships, we are focused on establishing service delivery models to deliver an identified set of services to customers through these partnerships. This allows us to effectively tailor services based on the needs of the customer and partner program. In addition, service delivery models allow for a series of progressive services tapping into partner resources, technology, asynchronous on-demand resources, and synchronous virtual workshops. Establishing these models will allow for a more efficient delivery model, allowing Employment Specialists to focus on individual needs during one-on-one sessions.

One example of a strategic partnership paired with a service model is one such offering of post-secondary training and transitional supports to a cohort of incarcerated individuals each semester. A partnership between the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Labor, and technical colleges in the state, including Lake Area Technical College,

Southeast Technical College, and Western Dakota Technical College, offers post-secondary training to inmates prior to release to the community. The DOC identifies those interested in the program of study and who are anticipated to be released shortly after the program concludes. DLR then enrolls individuals in workforce services and offers coursework and structured meetings to help prepare participants for release, including resume development, interview preparation, and securing housing and employment. Upon completion of the program, graduates may have an on-the-job training or choose to continue their education to earn their associate's degree. In addition to having a trained employee, business partners have the benefit of federal bonds and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

DLR has also engaged in another service delivery model with DOC, similar to the above model, without the post-secondary training. Similar to the previously mentioned model, DLR enrolls individuals in workforce services and conducts structured meetings to prepare them for release. This approach emphasizes securing employment before release by providing on-the-job training opportunities, federal bonds, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to assist individuals in obtaining employment.

Another example of such a partnership is between the Boxelder Job Corps and the WIOA Title I Youth program. This partnership is built to ensure exiting Job Corps students can participate in a work experience. Job Corps identifies students who are nearing completion of their trade training. These students are then enrolled in WIOA to receive support from DLR in completing their trade and education and building a professional portfolio before they leave. DLR provides workshops to assist students in creating resumes, selecting appropriate references, and practicing interview skills. DLR then works with Job Corps to identify worksites for work experiences. During the work experience, DLR stays in close contact with the business, the student, and Job Corps to identify any issues and address them. Oftentimes, these issues result from a lack of work history and an inability to communicate needs effectively. Students have the opportunity to turn these work experiences into employment based on their performance and desire to stay in the area. DLR will assist students, as needed, in finding employment before and after they leave Job Corps. DLR continues to support students through support services and case management throughout their entire follow-up period.

Much like these partnerships, DLR continues conversations to develop strategic partnerships where programs can come together to efficiently and effectively offer a holistic program for South Dakota's workforce. A few partnerships we look to enhance include:

- Recognizing the national drive and need for industry-related credentials by employers, DLR has initiated conversations with the National Farmworker Jobs Program to enhance our partnership by offering financial assistance to enhance co-enrollment of customers who have unmet financial needs to fulfill their training goals.
- In reviewing data, DLR has noticed a decrease in co-enrollment of WIOA Title I and Title II customers since the transition to an increase in virtual services. As the grant recipient for both programs, DLR continues to educate team members and develop strategic partnerships among them.
- DLR continues conversations with the Department of Social Services (DSS) that oversees the eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program for the state. Recognizing that planned eligibility and work requirement changes are anticipated, the agency is at the table to assist individuals.

Improve Access to Services

Despite limited budgets, the agency recognizes the need to advance technology of the workforce system to improve customer access and experience. South Dakota is a geographically large, rural state with half of the population in Sioux

Falls and Rapid City. With the Job Service Office closures in 2024, DLR has bolstered the use of virtual meetings and self-directed online services. Recognizing that technology skills are necessary in today's workforce and often in the job search process, this adjustment equips customers to learn the etiquette expected in a virtual environment.

DLR has focused on advancing translation services for customers. One effort included the deployment of devices offering real-time translation, face-to-face or virtually. Another was the implementation of a translation hub for written communication. This has helped the agency improve translation for important written communication, documents a customer may bring in, or outreach materials and policies. Efforts are underway to include live translation on our virtual service platform.

With the guidance and direction of the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications, DLR is working through a strategic technology development plan to identify and prioritize business needs. Clearly identifying areas of need will help to focus efforts in a quickly evolving digital landscape.

As part of the workforce system, DLR is partnering with the Bureau of Information and Technology, the state's central information technology department, and the Department of Education to embark on improving data governance and sharing, with the goal of establishing a statewide longitudinal database that provides insight into services that offer a return on investment.

In a time when costs are rising, budgets are at risk, and demands continue to rise, it is essential to modernize our system, allowing team members to focus on what really matters: building tomorrow's workforce. Decreasing time spent gathering papers and entering data can be turned into time helping our customers secure housing, apply for childcare, or connect with an employer. In addition, a modernized system can improve a customer's experience by engaging them in workforce services and offering recommendations for career paths and training opportunities. The agency anticipates receiving resources for making improvements, offering a return on investment.

In partnership with the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications, DLR plans to seek assistance to implement a customer-friendly intake and orientation system. This system will allow customers to share their private information in a comfortable, confidential environment of their choosing at a time that is convenient for them. After hearing about the workforce system, customers will be able to securely provide their eligibility data and documentation, sign necessary forms and authorizations, access workforce services available on demand, and, if additional assistance is desired, schedule with a DLR staff member.

Understanding the digital divide tends to negatively impact the customers the workforce system seeks to reach. DLR plans to connect with the library system in the state to assist in expanding service access for customers who may not have the resources or skills to connect virtually from home.

Workforce Partner Communication

A single statewide board, the Workforce Development Council, creates an environment for streamlined coordination among the core partners statewide. The board hears testimony from WIOA core programs, required partner programs, and participants or businesses impacted by these programs throughout the year. In addition, they visit facilities on-site during face-to-face meetings.

The annual WIOA Partner Symposium has joined forces with the Governor's Office of Economic Development to host workforce developers, local economic developers, and businesses. Those in attendance include Workforce Development Council Members, representatives of the Governor's Office, WIOA core and required partners, post-

secondary training providers, local economic development organizations, business representatives, and legislators. During this meeting, information is shared and collected on promising practices, challenges, successes, partners' existing and planned efforts, state economic and labor information, and more. This meeting offers a space to identify upcoming priorities and areas for coordinated collaboration.

Locally, agency partner meetings take place at least quarterly. These meetings allow for networking among community partners. Agenda items typically include informational sessions about various resources, policy changes, identifying gaps in services, and strategic partnerships.

At the participant level, DLR and others have embraced the Integrated Resource Teams model. This pulls together people representing the various programs, resources, and natural supports a customer can benefit from. These meetings allow for coordination and communication between service providers to ensure a customer's needs are being met and services are not duplicated.

In addition, representatives from partner programs meet at the leadership and local program levels frequently throughout the year.

Opportunities

The weaknesses identified are challenging to workforce growth and include a multi-pronged approach with a mindset of continuous improvement, as they are not easily solved. As we examine housing and childcare challenges across the state, the workforce system will communicate opportunities, take advantage of them where feasible, and support partnership efforts. Addressing affordable and accessible housing and childcare is a marathon and not a sprint.

A single management information system allowing for improved data sharing and program evaluation is not realistic at this time. However, the State of South Dakota has implemented single sign-on to mySD, allowing users to access many government services with a single username and password. While this is far from a single application or shared information that reduces the duplication a customer faces when applying for services, the teams representing each partner and working with customers can help customers navigate services and systems. Partners will continue to establish data-sharing agreements, communicate locally, and establish secure collaborative spaces to best assist our customers.

Improving digital access for our customers will remain a challenge and priority to decrease the digital divide in South Dakota. Knowing that many customers access the internet on handheld devices, it is important that essential services, including workforce services, can be accessed on them. In addition, systems must be intuitive, where feasible, offering face-to-face, paper, virtual, and online options to improve inclusivity. Evaluating policies to provide access to devices and services to ensure they can help bridge the divide while expanding a customer's skill set.

In an environment where resources are finite, it is important to focus efforts where results can be achieved as efficiently as possible. Improving data collection and using this data will help us focus efforts where needed. DLR continues to reimagine the workforce system of the past to help us achieve the workforce needed for the future. In the future, DLR anticipates seeking waivers to regulations that are prohibitive to achieving the desired workforce outcomes.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

(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).*

South Dakota is designated as a single local area state, pursuant to WIOA Sec. 106(d)(1), 106(d)(2); and 20 CFR §679.270. State Executive Order 95-14 established the Workforce Development Council (WDC) as the South Dakota Workforce Investment Board to carry out the role of the local board. DLR provides administrative and service delivery on behalf of the WDC. A single board and a single delivery entity create an environment for streamlined coordination between the core partners statewide.

Leadership and vision for the workforce development system emanate from the members of the WDC appointed by the Governor. This distinguished group of leaders guides the One-Stop delivery system in South Dakota. The WDC members, representing private-sector businesses, labor and community-based organizations, and state government (representing the Governor), bring effective representation for the interests, needs, and priorities of South Dakota. More information about the WDC may be found on the DLR website at https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/wdc/default.aspx. The Executive Order designated DLR as the fiscal, administrative, and delivery agent of the Council.

The WDC holds public meetings each quarter to hear testimonials, presentations, and action items, and to facilitate open discussion. As identified in the WDC by-laws, available at https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/wdc/documents/wdcbylaws.pdf, a member of the WDC may not vote on a matter under consideration by the state regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity the member represents); or that would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of the member; or engage in any other activity determined by the Governor to constitute a conflict of interest. By-laws allow a Council member to delegate a proxy or alternative designee due to attendance conflicts.

Under WIOA, the WDC is an alternate entity as defined in WIOA § 101(e). 20 CFR §679.150(c) requires an alternative entity that does not provide representation of all required categories under WIOA section 101(b) to explain how the state will ensure an ongoing role for any unrepresented membership groups in the state plan. With a 17-member board as identified in the by-laws, the WDC does not have representation as identified in WIOA section 101(b). With a state our size, the requirements identified in the WIOA law are challenging to maintain and create duplication of volunteer efforts. It can be difficult to secure leaders throughout the state with the capacity to serve. As a result, many of those who are willing already serve on multiple boards and councils throughout the state. To ensure representation from all required members, the Executive Director seeks appointments from the presiding officers of each legislative chamber to invite to WDC meetings and the annual WIOA Partner Symposium. In addition, chief elected officials from the city and county governments of the communities where meetings are held are invited to attend. The WDC has a recurring “Public Comment” agenda item offering the public an opportunity to provide input. Additionally, in developing the agenda, the WDC Executive Director seeks presentations from unrepresented members, including elected officials, partner programs, community agencies, and businesses. The annual WIOA Partner Symposium, which has now joined forces with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development Conference, is another method the Council uses to gather input from the unrepresented members. This annual event includes Workforce Development Council Members, representatives of the Governor’s Office, all WIOA core and required partners, including Adult Education and Literacy providers, post-secondary training providers, local economic development organizations, business representatives, including those with Registered Apprenticeships programs, and legislators. During this meeting, information is shared and collected on promising practices, challenges, successes, partners' existing and planned efforts, state economic and labor information, and more.

The WDC assumes roles consistent with WIOA Section 101(d). Responsibilities include:

- WIOA State plan vision and goals;
- Final approval of the WIOA State Plan;
- Discussion and input on improvements to the One-Stop system, including partner programs;

- Identification of best practices for employers, especially in recruitment, retention, and training;
- Review of policies and development of strategies for improvement;
- Offer guidance for the development of policies and proposals;
- Re-certification of One-Stop Career Centers; and
- Selection of the One-Stop Operator.

All meeting notifications, agendas, and minutes are sent via e-lert to anyone subscribed and are also available at <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/> and the DLR website in accordance with state law. Special accommodation or materials in alternative formats are available on request.

- (2) **Implementation of State Strategy.** *Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in 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.*

Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs provide funding for On-the-Job Training (OJT), Occupational Skills Training (OST) with a provider on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) in a program of study that can be completed in two years, Registered Apprenticeship programs with U.S. DOL, Work Experiences, youth incentives, and Support Services. Support Services can include a variety of items based on the customer's goals. Examples include transportation, housing, childcare, or testing costs. These programs also offer mock interviews, leadership development opportunities, job shadows, and the National Career Readiness Certificate®.

All Title I participants are also enrolled in the Title III Wagner-Peyser program. In addition, those enrolled in partner programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), or the Jobs for Veterans Services Grant (JVSG) are also enrolled in the Title I Adult Program. These customers receive services from one DLR Employment Specialist who can access resources from either program, therefore improving opportunities for the customer. An integrated resource team, comprised of representatives from various programs and supports, and the participant, may be formed to ensure everyone is working in a coordinated fashion to meet the customer's goals. Financial eligibility is prioritized for those receiving Public Assistance, Low Income, or Basic Skills Deficient, and working with a WIOA partner agency. Financial eligibility is also prioritized for those who lack a high school equivalency or are identified as an "ex-offender" and are working with a WIOA partner agency.

Youth aged 18 and older are also enrolled in the WIOA Adult program. This expands the customer's access to financial resources if needed. The Youth program also partners with Boxelder Job Corps, the state Department of Education Jobs for America's Graduates and K-12 GED® programs, the Department of Social Services' Independent Living and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs, Title II Adult Education and Literacy providers, Department of Corrections' Juvenile Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and referrals from internal teams.

Perkins funding recipients at the post-secondary level offer a variety of programs on the Eligible Training Provider List. Allowing access to these programs for WIOA Title I participants.

The Dislocated Worker program is primarily reserved for those referred through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program and who are actively receiving Reemployment Assistance benefits. The partnership between these programs allows for a comprehensive service delivery for these dislocated customers.

DLR anticipates utilizing WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding to establish and offer incumbent worker training during the 2026 calendar year.

Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs in South Dakota offer classes in workforce preparation, integrated education and training, high school equivalency test preparation, English language acquisition, digital literacy, and civics education. In addition to traditional onsite literacy/numeracy/oracy instruction [in small groups, large groups, and one-on-one], AEL activities also include Correctional Education, synchronous virtual instruction, and asynchronous Distance Education to better accommodate learners' varied situations, capacities, and barriers.

These Adult Education instructional services and activities naturally align with our WIOA Partners under the joint PIRL for reporting as required by WIOA Section 116's *Performance Accountability System*. For Co-Enrolled participants, AEL has collaborated with Titles I, III, and IV to develop means to share data with partner-programs in a secure, efficient manner. In addition to providing instructional contact hours for partners to maintain active Periods of Participation, AEL shares assessment data (date, instrument, level, form, scale score) for our partners' Basic Skills Deficiency determination and Measurable Skill Gains, as well as earned GED® credentials. Of course, these shared reporting data underscore the communication, coordination, and collaboration required for the tandem case management of our co-enrolled adult learners across WIOA partners.

Title III Wagner-Peyser helps to support SDWORKS, the management information system; Northstar Digital Literacy; WorkKeys® Curriculum™; Alison eLearning courses; and a virtual job fair platform, among others. It does not offer direct financial services to businesses or participants.

Programs utilizing the SDWORKS management information system enroll all customers in the Wagner-Peyser program. This includes Title I programs, SCSEP, JVS, TAA, RESEA, and many TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) customers. These basic career services are the essential foundation for career development.

Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation offers a wide variety of individualized services tailored to meet the employment goals of people with disabilities. Services include but are not limited to counseling and guidance; tuition assistance for post-secondary education; on-the-job training; paid work experiences; job placement and coaching; employment follow-along; work-readiness training; pre-employment transition services; disability-related skills training; benefits counseling; assistive technology; and support services. Vocational rehabilitation also offers support to businesses by funding business-led organizations and connecting them directly with job seekers with disabilities.

(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.

Through federal funding, DLR has developed Registered Apprenticeship programs focused on providing K-12 students, ages 16 and older, opportunities to participate in an apprenticeship program prior to graduation. This allows students to gain apprenticeship credits as well as credits toward graduation and post-graduation. If needed, Title I Youth funding can support pre-apprenticeships or registered apprenticeship training.

While the RESEA program supports the integrity of the Reemployment Assistance program, it does not provide financial services to help customers achieve their employment goals. By enrolling RESEA referrals into the Title I Dislocated Worker program, they can receive the financial supports associated with it. Similarly, Dislocated Worker funding is utilized to offer Support Services for Trade Adjustment Assistance recipients.

Through agreements with the Department of Social Services (DSS), the DLR operates the work component of the TANF program and SNAP E&T programs in portions of the state. This partnership allows for seamless enrollment into Wagner-

Peyser and Title I programs, including access to financial services. As Medicaid work requirements are established throughout 2026, DLR has shared our desire to proactively join the conversation to ensure the American Job Center is prepared to assist.

While South Dakota currently lacks a grant for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, the Wagner-Peyser and JVSG programs have established partnerships with the Volunteers of America (VOA) Dakotas and the Volunteers of America Northern Rockies to provide coordinated services to homeless veterans. In addition, the JVSG program will assist veterans referred from the Veterans Administration's Veteran Readiness and Employment Program (VR&E) by providing labor market information and supporting veterans identified as job-ready.

*(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.*

In addition to the multitude of efforts described in other sections of this plan, partners are dedicated to coordinating efforts to help joint customers. To improve and establish these strategic partnerships, efforts to facilitate communication and information among all workforce partners will take place at the state, local, and participant levels. These efforts include:

- In 2022, DLR hosted the first WIOA Partner Symposium. This annual event brings together leadership from the WIOA core programs, required partners, and additional partners such as the Department of Corrections and the Department of Education. In addition, employers and participants attend as appropriate to contribute to panel discussions. This event allows for networking and collaborative discussions. Starting in 2025, DLR joined forces with the Governor's Office of Economic Development conference, which brings together businesses and local economic developers. In 2026, a workforce track will be added to this conference.
- Locally, agency partner meetings take place at least quarterly. These meetings allow for networking among community partners. Agenda items typically include informational sessions on various resources, policy changes, identifying service gaps, and strategic partnerships.
- At the participant level, DLR and others have embraced the Integrated Resource Teams (IRT) model. This pulls together people representing the various programs, financial resources, including supportive services, and natural supports a customer can benefit from. This customer-driven team assists all customers served by the One-Stop System, including those with disabilities, by increasing access to the services needed to help them achieve their employment goals rather than forcing them to navigate the workforce system alone. While each workforce partner offers valuable services, our customers have multiple needs that require assistance from numerous programs to create a comprehensive approach. The IRT meetings allow for coordination and communication between service providers to ensure a customer's needs are being met and services are not duplicated. All partners of the One-Stop System continue to improve upon resources and services that can be accessed virtually, improving access to workforce services in rural areas of the state. In addition, all partners provide in-person outreach and services to the smaller communities throughout the state.
- DLR has staff serving customers through multiple programs. The statewide service delivery structure allows staff to be organized in teams by the programs they offer, the services they deliver, and the customers they serve. One example is the co-enrollment of JVSG-eligible individuals into the Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I programs. DLR has cross-trained Consolidated Positions (CP) so they can access financial services available through WIOA Title I programs rather than seeking approval from another staff member. In addition, the DLR JVSG team on the Western side of the state conducts outreach to the Hot Springs Veterans Administration (VA) Domiciliary. During those visits, the JVSG CP staff coordinate with the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist and, with the assistance of DLR non-

JVSG staff, veterans at the Domiciliary are assessed for JVSG eligibility to attend the Guided Group Discovery classes conducted by the CP staff at the Domiciliary. These classes are designed to help veterans with disabilities find employment that matches both their skills and interests and the needs of employers. This partnership with the VA Domiciliary staff has enabled veterans to be triaged for JVSG eligibility by DLR non-JVSG staff and case-managed by DLR JVSG CP staff and has been and continues to be a unique and successful partnership collaboration.

- Where feasible, partners collaborate on training for staff by implementing workforce programs to offer networking opportunities and improve familiarity with services, resources, and professional knowledge.

(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.

In recent years, DLR has shifted its approach to engaging with the business community. Rather than focusing solely on sharing information about services and programs, which can sometimes feel overwhelming, we now prioritize building lasting, collaborative relationships with businesses. By learning about each business's workforce needs and goals, we can better tailor our services and identify programs that align with their specific priorities and challenges.

In 2025, DLR implemented a new annual employer survey to try and learn about the training needs employers face. In visiting with employers, DLR has also begun learning about valuable entry-level training or credentials employers are seeking that do not duplicate efforts already offered by employers.

With the low unemployment rate, most businesses are interested in qualified candidates to fill their positions. As a result, it is important to learn about their skills and training gaps so we can support them in developing or identifying training programs that meet their needs. In turn, we can then create service delivery models to support our customers through these programs. In addition, DLR has invested in a virtual job fair platform that enables businesses to connect with a broader pool of job seekers. The virtual format also offers job seekers a more convenient and confidential way to explore employment opportunities.

The AEL program works with businesses to develop the skill set of their workforce. This may include preparation for the workforce, integrated education and training programs, or English language acquisition specific to the industry.

DLR has established an online, learn-as-you-go module to train on-the-job mentors. In addition, we offer a comprehensive toolkit that provides all the resources needed to plan and implement a successful mentorship program. This toolkit includes implementation guides and other valuable resources, and is available at no cost, allowing employers to easily establish and train new mentors in their workplace.

DLR staff within the Workforce Development Division administer several federal programs designed to strengthen South Dakota's workforce and support employers in meeting their hiring needs. These include the Foreign Labor Certification (FLC), Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and Fidelity Bonding programs.

The FLC program assists agricultural and non-agricultural employers in addressing temporary labor shortages when there are not enough qualified U.S. workers available. Through the H-2A program, DLR helps farms supplement their workforce during peak seasons, while the H-2B program provides similar assistance to non-agricultural businesses across industries.

The WOTC program encourages inclusive hiring by offering a federal tax credit to employers who hire individuals from target groups that have historically faced barriers to employment, helping both employers meet their staffing needs and individuals gain meaningful work opportunities.

The Fidelity Bonding program promotes second-chance employment by providing employers with free bonds of up to \$25,000 for up to one year. These bonds protect against potential losses due to employee dishonesty and serve as a tool to reduce hiring risk while opening doors for job seekers who are rebuilding trust and stability through employment. In the spring of 2024, DLR implemented a statewide Business Services team. Members of this team can focus on industry sectors, learning about their business and workforce needs to determine which services and programs DLR offers to meet those needs and to inform the workforce system. Integrated with the Business Services team are the JVSG team who is focused on the hiring of Veterans, the Education and Industry Integration Coordinator who is focused on connecting businesses to schools and students, the Registered Apprenticeship team who assists with the development and maintenance of registered apprenticeship programs, Rehabilitation Services who specializes in assisting individuals with disabilities, and the Governor's Office of Economic Development to offer comprehensive services to businesses in our state. As the team and partners identify business needs, DLR will offer Workforce Knowledge Series events addressing these needs. These virtual offerings will provide information about topics businesses are most interested in, such as labor laws, tax credits, and more.

With the success of the first two WIOA Workforce Symposium partnership meetings, this event has been integrated with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, which will enable greater business engagement.

*(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 Department of Education (DOE), in partnership with the Board of Technical Education and the Board of Regents, received a grant to establish a statewide longitudinal data system. DLR supported this grant with the hopes of adding workforce data once the system is built. This will not be without challenges, considering the K-12 system does not have social security numbers, and the reemployment assistance data is based on social security numbers. However, recognizing the value this system could add, the agencies have engaged in conversation in preparation for future grant opportunities.

DLR's Education and Industry Integration Coordinator helps schools connect students with businesses for work-based learning opportunities and supports businesses interested in partnering with schools.

DLR has workforce staff represented in the Department of Education's capstone standards revision process. Recent conversations have focused on bolstering youth apprenticeship offerings and structuring pre-apprenticeship programs to lead to industry-recognized credentials and registered apprenticeship programs.

Through Registered Apprenticeship funding, DLR has developed toolkits for schools to share information about registered apprenticeships with students and parents. In addition, toolkits have been established to guide schools through the development of a registered apprenticeship for their students.

DLR is partnering in a Career and Technical Education consortium to learn from one another and improve student offerings through Perkins and other funding sources. This is a 12-month, multi-agency workgroup that brings together education, employers, and organizations.

The WIOA Title I Youth program coordinates with the DOE's Jobs for America's Graduates program to assist these students with securing work-based learning opportunities and assist them with their post-high school goals.

South Dakota's technical colleges offer the majority of programs on South Dakota's Eligible Training Provider List. Annual visits to these schools have provided insight into partnership improvements, enabling DLR to have a single point of contact for these schools when assistance is needed. These visits also help DLR learn about emerging programs and share known business needs.

WIOA Title II Adult Education providers, paired with a few other adult education providers throughout the state, offer secondary preparation instruction with a student goal of GED® attainment. The WIOA Title II program has six providers throughout the state, one of which is housed in the Department of Corrections.

Adult Education and Literacy providers also offer English as a Second Language courses and citizenship acquisition courses. Providers collaborate with local businesses to identify the skills required within the local community. These providers often use a combination of real-world and work-world situations to help individuals learn essential skills and the English language.

A service delivery model called Participants Reaching Employment Potential (PREP) was established to reduce the financial burden many AEL participants face as they pursue their educational goals. With the low unemployment rate, many students stopped their studies to work. With a goal of GED® attainment, the PREP model allows for part-time subsidized employment and support services paired with AEL coursework.

With limited testing availability in the state, the Department of Labor is working with the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications to offer laptops for GED® test takers to complete the online version of the assessment. Once an individual in the state obtains their GED®, DLR is working in conjunction with the GED Administrator to ensure they are made aware of DLR's services.

A partnership between the Title I Youth Program and Job Corps enables these out-of-school youth to earn wages during work experiences related to their training programs. In addition, having a Job Service Staff member available to assist them as they transition to their home community improves their post-training success.

WIOA Title I programs offer tuition assistance for eligible participants with unmet financial needs in programs leading to high-demand occupations. These programs must be available through the Eligible Training Provider List. In addition, WIOA Title I programs offer a variety of work experiences and on-the-job training opportunities. While Registered Apprenticeships are available, we haven't seen many Title I participants hired by Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors.

DLR has regular meetings with the Board of Regents, the Board of Technical Education, and the DOE, with the goal of improving post-secondary preparation resources for South Dakotans. As a result of this effort, the Our Dakota Dreams website, <https://ourdakotadreams.com/>, was created for potential students, parents, and educators. Through this partnership, DLR offers annual Federal Financial Aid training for all DLR Employment Specialists.

*(F) **Improving Access to Post-secondary Credentials.** Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized post-secondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This*

includes industry-recognized credentials, such as certificates, licenses, or certifications, that are portable and stackable.

One effort of the state funding has been to establish industry-focused intermediaries for Registered Apprenticeships. These intermediaries focus on high-demand sectors including Agriculture, Education, Transportation, Manufacturing, and Cyber. The intermediary partners actively seek industry partners to expand existing training opportunities. These partners are crucial, as they engage directly with businesses, address their needs through established programs, and provide the educational component of registered apprenticeships. In addition, the intermediary serves as the sponsor responsible for meeting U.S. DOL's Office of Apprenticeship requirements, reducing this burden from businesses. Intermediaries are tasked with developing pre-apprenticeship programs related to their industry. DLR is seeking to transition from an Office of Apprenticeship State to a State Apprenticeship Agency.

DLR maintains collaborative efforts with multiple state agencies to improve access to post-secondary credentials and workforce readiness for South Dakotans. These partnerships are essential to aligning education, workforce, and industry goals.

One such collaboration includes regular meetings with the Board of Regents (BOR), Board of Technical Education (BOTE), and the Department of Education (DOE). From this effort, the *Our Dakota Dreams* initiative was launched, providing a centralized website, <https://ourdakotadreams.com/>, that offers post-secondary preparation resources for students, parents, and educators. Through this partnership, DLR also delivers annual Federal Financial Aid training to all DLR Employment Specialists, ensuring staff are equipped to guide individuals through the financial aid process.

In addition, South Dakota was selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy to Advance Youth Apprenticeship. This initiative brings together DLR, BOR, BOTE, DOE, and industry to develop a statewide framework for youth and pre-apprenticeship programs. The framework will align with Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways in high schools, creating seamless transitions into post-secondary credentials, which include either Registered Apprenticeships or degree programs. By embedding pre-apprenticeship and RAP models within CTE, the state is looking to increase access for high school students and strengthen the talent pipeline into high-demand occupations.

As a further step, DLR is developing a management information system to improve how Registered Apprenticeship programs are established and maintained. This system will assist in creating programs and tracking apprentices' progress, while also enabling data collection and report generation, and interacting with the U.S. DOL's Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data (RAPIDS). By making it easier for businesses to start and manage their programs, we expect more businesses to participate, creating more opportunities for South Dakotans.

With a historic low unemployment rate, it is essential that the workforce system meets our customers where they are and establishes coordinated service-delivery models to offer wraparound services, with the goal of engaging those disengaged from the workforce. This can include partnerships with the Department of Corrections, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the Board of Technical Education to offer short-term post-secondary credentials to incarcerated individuals.

The BOR recently recognized college-readiness and college credit based on GED® scores (<https://doe.sd.gov/ged/documents/GED-SDBOR.pdf>) and direct admission to select South Dakota universities based on academic achievement in high school.

To assist with tuition costs, South Dakota's Board of Regents offers the Opportunity Scholarship, based on academic achievement, to South Dakota students attending a state university. The Build Dakota Scholarship is a philanthropic,

employer-led scholarship offering students a no-cost Associate's degree in high-demand occupations at South Dakota's four technical colleges.

DLR is keeping an eye on the evolution of Workforce Pell implementation, hoping this will be another resource to aid career pathways, credential attainment, and workforce development in the state. In addition, the Department of Corrections is leading efforts for Second Chance Pell and recognition of Prison Education Programs.

In the 2023 legislative session, Senate Bill 76 (<https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/api/Documents/250079.pdf>) was passed. In summary, SB 76 expands South Dakota Codified Law 36-1D-4 to recognize licenses issued by another state for any occupation requiring a South Dakota license. To have their license recognized under this statute, an individual must have a current license from another state or country substantially equivalent to an in-state license; demonstrate competency in their profession; pass a background check; and be in good standing in the state or country that issued their license. If an individual meets these criteria and pays their fee, they will be issued a license to practice in South Dakota by either the licensing board or the department secretary – whichever has the authority to issue the license.

*(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.*

In partnership with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, the Dakota Roots team continues to promote South Dakota's workforce opportunities to individuals across the country. Through in-person events, podcasts, social media, and other digital outreach efforts, the team has successfully increased interest among out-of-state job seekers considering relocation to South Dakota.

Applicants who engage with Dakota Roots receive one-on-one guidance from a Job Advisor located in a local Job Service office. With South Dakota's historically low unemployment rate, it remains vital to explore creative and targeted strategies to help businesses grow by strengthening the state's workforce pipeline.

Expanding registered apprenticeship throughout the state has been a joint effort between the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) and DLR through the Start Today SD Apprenticeship Program (Start Today). GOED representatives work directly with businesses across the state, helping to share the benefits of RAPs with their contacts. GOED refers businesses interested in RAPs to Start Today. Start Today connects with GOED on distributing quarterly reports, newsletters, and event awareness directly to businesses throughout the state.

Another strategic approach has been to connect with local Economic Development groups to raise awareness of support services for struggling businesses or individuals facing layoffs. Collaborating with these organizations can help bridge the gap and ensure that valuable resources and assistance are effectively communicated to those in need during challenging economic times.

Joint training and recruitment efforts have increased awareness of economic development efforts in the state and the importance of workforce development in these conversations. This improved awareness allows for referrals from one organization to another based on the needs of the business community. Starting in 2024, the WIOA Partner Symposium was paired with the GOED annual convention. This joint effort brings together economic developers throughout the state and the workforce development system.

As DLR launches an incumbent worker training program for businesses, DLR will coordinate these efforts with GOED.

(b) State Operating Systems and Policies. *The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II, Strategic Elements. This includes—*

- (1) **State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies** *(for example, labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case management systems, job banks, etc.).*

Primary operating system efforts are focused on developing a client-centric supply system to engage individuals, connect them to available services and resources, and facilitate their employment goals. SDWORKS (Titles I, III), FACES (Title IV), and LACES (Title II) are the three WIOA data management systems.

DLR utilizes SDWORKS, Geographic Solutions, Inc. (GeoSol, Inc.) Virtual One-Stop System, as its primary management information system for Title I and Title III programs. SDWORKS is a one-stop system that serves as a job bank, the case management system for businesses and citizens, collects and reports ETPL data elements, and collects PIRL reporting items. SDWORKS also allows for in-demand labor market information to identify future growth, current demand, and location. In addition, this system is utilized for other workforce programs operated by DLR, including TAA, JVSG, and SCSEP, with the SCSEP using the Grantee Performance Management System for required reporting. Furthermore, DLR is currently developing a customized MIS for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) with a vendor. This system, known as PowerWorkforce, will serve as a one-stop platform for sponsors and DLR staff to develop programs, track apprentice progress, manage apprentices' cases, and handle RAP reporting.

DLR has recently completed the integration of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program into SDWORKS. This integration allows employers not only to post job orders and search for candidates, but also to apply for a tax credit through the WOTC program, while automating a portion of a previously very manual process.

South Dakota is evaluating when and where they are able to interface between various systems to ensure data collection is correct and efficient. South Dakota intends to use interfaces not only to improve data sharing between core and required partners but also to enhance the customer experience. South Dakota has recently updated an interface between DLR and DHS to improve data sharing between several core programs.

- (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.*

South Dakota implemented a WIOA Policy Manual in 2017. This manual can be found at https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/wioa/manual.aspx. Updates to this manual are communicated through a workforce memo process. This includes a period of time when staff can review the policies, ask questions, or recommend edits. Also, during the review period, a virtual meeting is held to review the updates. After the review period, updates are made live. DLR is continuously working to improve policy, revision processes, and communication with job service office staff to ensure compliance and provide the best service possible to customers.

All job seekers who enroll in Wagner-Peyser receive an Intake and Orientation to the One-Stop System. This includes becoming familiar with their equal opportunity and grievance process and learning about the services offered by all partners of the One-Stop System. The [Policy 5.2 Case Management](#) and [Policy 3.2 One-Stop System](#) provide information on the coordination with partner programs and the need for direct linkage if the program is not offered at the Job Service Office.

Expectations of the One-Stop Center certifications and a list of One-Stop Organizations in the state can be found in

Policy 3.2 One-Stop System. A list of services available through the One-Stop partner agencies in South Dakota can be found in Form 3 One-Stop Services. The Memorandum of Understanding for the One-Stop Career Center Certification, including the One-Stop infrastructure funding agreement, is in Appendix 2. The MOU states the agencies co-located in the One-Stop Centers pay for their costs based on the square footage. Those who are not co-located and are required to share in the costs of the One-Stop Center will pay their portion of the costs based on the direct linkages between the One-Stop Centers and those partners. The partners will be notified of their costs twice annually.

Many programs operated by DLR through the Job Service Offices co-enroll customers into multiple programs based on eligibility to offer the best range of services to meet their needs. Examples of this include:

- A customer who meets Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) eligibility is also enrolled in the Wagner-Peyser and Adult programs.
- A Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) referral is enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and the Dislocated Worker program.
- A Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) customer is enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and Adult programs.
- An individual eligible for JVSG is enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and Adult programs, increasing access to financial resources available through the Adult program.

However, due to tightened budgets, reduced staff time, and efforts to manage change, the agency is implementing service delivery models that focus on strategic partnerships and customer groups that can be served through a cohort. In addition, partnership funnels have been created to allow the agency to manage budgets and staff capacity. An example of this includes:

The Department of Corrections (DOC) identifies inmates soon to be released to take part in post-secondary training programs. The DOC transition team works with DLR to assist the customer in earning their credential. Upon release, DLR assists the customer to secure housing and employment while continuing career services as needed.

(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.

State Agency Organization

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND REGULATION (DLR)

DLR is the designated agency for WIOA Title I, II, and III core programs. The Workforce Development Division also oversees TAA, RESEA, JVSG, SCSEP, NCRC™, Rapid Response, Foreign Labor Certification (FLC), Registered Apprenticeships, Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a Federal Bonding Grant, and National Dislocated Worker Grants. The Division of Field Operations oversees 10 American Job Centers located across the state. The agency also contains the Reemployment Assistance (RA) Division and the Labor Market Information Center. DSS is the designated agency overseeing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP). DSS contracts with DLR to offer the employment and training component of these programs.

The Director-level positions below report directly to the Cabinet Secretary, Marcia Hultman. The Workforce Development Division is responsible for the oversight, monitoring, and implementation of workforce programs, grants, policies, and reporting. This oversight is in partnership with the Administrative Services Division, which oversees the fiscal management and reporting of workforce grants. These efforts are completed in collaboration with various divisions within the agency and partners, including core, required, and community partners. The Office of the Deputy

Secretary houses the Workforce Development Council Executive Director, the Labor Market Information, the Equal Opportunity Officer, the State Monitor Advocate, and the communications team. The Field Operations team comprises the One-Stop Operator and team members at the American Job Centers, who are tasked with operating the programs and serving customers throughout the state. The Technology Development Division operates SDWORKS, the state's job data bank, which also serves as the management information system for DLR's workforce programs. The Reemployment Assistance Division houses the RESEA program and Trade Readjustment Allowance service.

Through an agreement with the Department of Social Services, which serves as the Administrative Entity, DLR operates the TANF work program and SNAP Employment and Training programs in select counties throughout the state. In partnership with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, DLR leads registered apprenticeship and out-of-state recruitment efforts for the state.

DLR has five Comprehensive One-Stop Centers and five Affiliate One-Stop Centers. Due to stagnant budgets and increased costs, DLR implemented a statewide service delivery model. Team members of the Workforce Development Division and the Field Operations Division are organized by customers served. For example, our Career Launch team is focused on serving Title I youth. This team has one Labor Program Specialist from the Workforce Development Division who establishes policy and program direction and offers training and technical assistance, then works closely with two job service managers from the Field Operations Division who build partnerships with core, required, and community partners to implement the program, provide oversight and day-to-day assistance of the staff providing services to youth in our state. This Career Launch team partners with Boxelder Job Corps, the state Department of Education Jobs for America's Graduates and K-12 GED programs, Department of Social Services Independent Living and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs, Title II Adult Education and Literacy Providers, Department of Corrections' Juvenile Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and referrals from internal teams.

With support and approval of the Workforce Development Council, the Director of Workforce Development is responsible for program oversight, monitoring, and One-Stop Certifications. The Workforce Data Team, located in the Workforce Development Division, oversees reporting integrity and data validation.

Office of the Secretary

- Cabinet Secretary – Marcia Hultman
- Deputy Secretary and WDC Executive Director – Dawn Dovre
- Labor Market Information Center (LMIC) Administrator – Melodee Lane
- Organizational Development Manager, Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer, State Monitor Advocate – Derek Gustafson

Workforce Development Division

The mission of the **Workforce Development Division** is to develop innovative workforce solutions that allow for the implementation of federal workforce programs and state initiatives while meeting the workforce needs of job seekers and businesses. To ensure programs are delivered in an effective manner by establishing workforce program policy, providing technical assistance for program implementation, and evaluating programmatic data. Under the guidance of the South Dakota Workforce Development Council (WDC) and in collaboration with partner agencies, the Division's efforts will guide individuals toward sustainable career paths, build a skilled workforce, and strengthen the State's economy.

- Director – Kendra Ringstmeyer
- Assistant Director – Felicia Alspach
 - Title I Youth Program Specialist – Kaitlin Foster

- Title I Adult and SCSEP Program Specialist – McKenzie Medley
- Title I Dislocated Worker, RESEA, TAA– Laura Trapp
- Title II AEL Program Specialist – John Anderson
- JVSG Program Specialist – Jason Nysten
- TANF work program, SNAP E&T Program Specialist – Penny Brandt
- Business Services Manager – Taunya Charlton
 - Title III Wagner- Peyser
 - Individual Services – Sommer VanDewater
 - Business Services – Nathan Schlimgen
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit – Jill Vining
 - Foreign Labor Certification - Jill Vining
 - Federal Bonding – Nathan Schlimgen
 - Rapid Response and Incumbent Worker Training – Nathan Schlimgen
- Workforce Data Manager – Jacob Fuerst
 - Federal Performance and Reporting Program Specialist – Jami Burrer
 - Data Validation, Registered Apprenticeship – James Babbitt
 - Eligible Training Provider List – Alan McEntaffer
- Apprenticeship Program Manager – Tara Bartekoske
 - Apprenticeship Program Specialist – Caitlin Kemnitz
 - Apprenticeship Program Specialist – Ashley Lacek
 - Apprenticeship Coordinators
- State Workforce Initiatives Manager – Heather Nelson
 - Workforce Memos
 - Education and Industry Integration Coordination, Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere, Google Career Certificate program – Morgan Heuer
 - Family First Initiative program, Big Interview, Northstar Digital Literacy, ACT® WorkKeys® Curriculum™, and National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC™) – Hannah Resick
 - Workforce Development Council, meetings, and events coordination – Molly Banuat

Technology Development Division

The mission of the **Technology Development Division** is to build a quality and comprehensive technology infrastructure, establish and maintain an effective data environment, and deliver quality, cost-effective, and reliable technology solutions for the Department. To ensure efficient workforce program support and accurate federal reporting, to provide quality customer service by remaining at the forefront of new technology, driving system enhancement projects, and providing expert technical assistance.

- Director – Andrew Szilvasi
- Technical Services Administrator – Tom Meyer
- Management Analyst – Lance Gladis

Field Operations Division

The **Division of Field Operations** is responsible for the local South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation Job Service offices in communities across the state. The mission of the division is to achieve a skilled workforce contributing to economic development by efficiently and respectfully serving businesses, job seekers, and community partners through innovative workforce development solutions and serving as an information resource.

- Director and One-Stop Operator – Bill McEntaffer
- Job Service Office Managers

Administrative Services Division

The mission of the **Administrative Services Division** is to provide timely and expert fiscal support, information, accounting, purchasing, and property management to DLR staff and partner agencies to achieve Department, State and Federal requirements.

- Director – Emily Ward
- Accountant III Accounts Payable – Jessica Duvall
- Accountant II Workforce Services Grants – Jennifer Kamps
- Accountant II Apprenticeship Grants – Brian Watterson
- Accountant I Contract Management – Daniel Stalzer
- Labor Program Specialist Workforce Services Finance – Diane Ball
- Purchasing and Property Management, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – Jim Dornbusch

Reemployment Assistance Division

The mission of the **Reemployment Assistance (RA) Division** is to provide economic support to workers and protect the interests of workers and businesses by determining RA eligibility and liability, collecting taxes, making payments, and ensuring compliance through exceptional service.

- Director – Pauline Heier
- Deputy Director – Dawn Williams

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)

DHS is the designated state agency for the WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) providers in South Dakota. The Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired are the designated state units for the VR program. The Division of Rehabilitation Services is located in 11 offices throughout the state with eight co-located with DLR. The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has three district offices and two satellite offices, all co-located with the DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services.

DHS Leadership Team:

Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, Cabinet Secretary

Tom Martinec, Deputy Secretary

Tami Darnall, Director of Budget and Finance

Jenna Howell, Senior Legal Counsel

Barbara Abeln, Director, South Dakota Developmental Center

Heather Krzmarzick, Director, Division of Long Term Services & Supports

Ronda Williams, Director, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired

Eric Weiss, Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services

Kevin Dunn, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

Kristen Kilmer, Communications Administrator

Jessica Spencer, Strategic Projects Director

Black Hills Special Services Cooperative is the designated agency for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). A close partnership between the WIOA 167 (NFJP) and Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program State Monitor Advocate within DLR, located in three office locations throughout the state, with one of their offices co-located with DLR in the Sioux Falls Job Service.

The U.S. Forest Service oversees the operations of the Boxelder Job Corps Center.

Six tribal entities oversee the U.S. DOL Native American Programs in South Dakota. These include the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribe.

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program at the secondary education level is overseen by the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE). The Board of Technical Education oversees the post-secondary CTE programs.

National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA) is the SCSEP grantee in the state that partners closely with DLR, the state SCSEP grantee.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

FEDERAL AGENCY	PROGRAM	SOUTH DAKOTA AGENCY
U.S. Department of Labor	WIOA Title I Adult	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	WIOA Title I Youth	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	WIOA Title I Youth Build	<i>Not currently in SD</i>
U.S. Department of Labor	Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)	<i>Not currently in SD</i>
U.S. Department of Labor	WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	Reemployment Assistance Benefits (RA)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Labor	National Farmworker Jobs Programs	Black Hills Special Services Cooperative
U.S. Department of Labor	Job Corps	U.S. Forest System
U.S. Department of Labor	Native American Programs	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux Tribe, & Yankton Sioux Tribe
U.S. Department of Education	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)
U.S. Department of Education	WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Department of Human Services (DHS)
U.S. Department of Education	Career and Technical Education Program (CTE)	Board of Technical Education
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	Department of Social Services (DSS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	Department of Social Services (DSS)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services TO U.S. Department of Labor	Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)
Department of Housing and Urban Development	Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Program (HUD)	<i>Not currently in SD</i>

(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.

South Dakota is a single-area state with a single region and a single Workforce Development Board (WDB). The Workforce Development Council (WDC), established through Executive Order 94-7 by South Dakota Governor Walter D. Miller on March 15, 1994, serves as the state's sole WDB. The WDC Executive Director facilitates quarterly meetings.

Two of these are typically virtual, while the other two are face-to-face and held at various locations throughout the state, with agenda items focused on training opportunities and workforce challenges in South Dakota. The meetings conclude with tours of American Job Centers, training programs, businesses statewide, and places like Job Corps and Title II partners. The Council hears testimony at each meeting from partners, including those not represented on the Council and underrepresented groups, participants, and businesses finding success through a variety of WIOA programs. As meeting locations move around the state, the WDC also hears from job service office managers and staff about successes and challenges in local areas. These meetings assist in developing and adjusting workforce policies.

The annual WIOA Partner Symposium has joined forces with the Governor's Office of Economic Development's annual conference. This event includes Workforce Development Council Members, representatives of the Governor's Office, all WIOA core and required partners, post-secondary training providers, local economic development organizations, business representatives, and legislators. During this meeting, information is shared and collected on promising practices, challenges, successes, partners' existing and planned efforts, state economic and labor information, and more. This meeting offers a space to identify upcoming priorities and areas for coordinated collaboration.

The WDC Executive Director structures agendas based on upcoming needs. At least annually, DLR's Director of Administrative Services provides financial updates to the Council to aid council members in reviewing One-Stop Certification requests. Quarterly, the Labor Market Information Administrator provides updates to the council, keeping them apprised of labor trends that drive policy decisions. As needed, policies are brought to the WDC for action. Roundtable discussions provide opportunities for input on policies, goals, and strategies, as well as to highlight and share promising practices. Various workforce programs and community partners provide updates on their services and how their programs contribute to the development of the workforce, including career pathways.

In addition to quarterly meetings and the annual WIOA Partner Symposium, DLR staff meet frequently with other state agencies and community groups to develop workforce strategies that improve outcomes for underrepresented membership groups. This includes corrections, human services, health, homeless, veterans, and tribal relations. Functioning as an advisory workgroup has strengthened relationships and made partners more aware and informed of DLR services.

The WDC membership was grandfathered in as an alternative entity under WIOA Section 101(e). The council consists of 17 members representing private-sector business, labor and community-based organizations, and state government. A roster of members is available at https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/wdc/default.aspx.

Private Sector:

- Lee Anderson – Trail King, Vice President of Human Resources (Industry: Manufacturing; small business)
- Michelle Black – Northwestern Energy, Human Resources Generalist (Industry: Trade, Transportation and Utilities)
- Carla Gatzke – Daktronics, Vice President of Human Resources (Industry: Manufacturing; small business)
- John Herweh – Neiman Enterprises, Inc., Chief People Officer (Industry: Timber Production)
- Candy Klingensmith – L.G. Everist, Inc., Director of Human Resources (Industry: Mining, Logging and Construction; small business)
- Joel Sylvester – Five Star Call Centers, Chief Client Officer (Industry: Customer Service)
- Amy Tlam – Howe, Inc., Director of Human Resources and Safety (Industry: Trade, Transportation and Utilities; small business)
- Keri Wientjes – Mobridge Regional Hospital, Director of Human Resources (Industry: Private Education and Health Services)

- One Vacancy

Community-based Organizations:

- Dave Bonde – Fort Pierre Economic Development Corporation, Executive Director

Organized Labor:

- Jon Mahan – United Brotherhood of Carpenters/North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, Assistant Director of Resource Management
- Mark Rogers – Sheet Metal Workers Local 10, Business Agent

State Government:

- Liza Clark – Board of Regents, Chief of Staff
- Marcia Hultman – Department of Labor and Regulation, Cabinet Secretary
- Hannah Sage – Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Partner Relations Representative
- Shana Davis – Department of Education, Director of College, Career, and Student Success

Title II Representative:

- Marcia Hultman – Department of Labor and Regulation, Cabinet Secretary

Vocational Rehabilitation Director:

- Kim Ludwig – Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services Business Specialist (representing Eric Weiss)

(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 the other one-stop delivery system partner program services and the 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.

DLR has implemented a quarterly data validation review, a semi-annual active file review, and an annual program review, as outlined in Oversight and Monitoring Policy 6.7. DLR’s Data Team leads this effort with assistance from representatives from the Job Service Offices and Workforce Development Team. This allows for improved data integrity and staff training.

DLR’s Data Team leads the review of performance outcomes, Title I and III Quarterly Report Analysis, and TAA Data Integrity reviews on a quarterly basis. Each leadership team receives a synopsis of errors, missing performance indicators, as well as recommended changes. The Data Team also leads brainstorming sessions on how to improve performance based on any commonalities identified.

In addition to quarterly reviews, the DLR Workforce Development Team completes a comprehensive review of each Job Service Office every three years. Items reviewed include the requirements of a One-Stop Center, Americans with Disabilities Act review, Equal Opportunity (EO) review, performance measurements, customer reviews, and workforce program effectiveness and compliance.

Upon completion of the review, a letter identifying findings with required actions, areas of concern with suggested actions, and promising practices is sent to the One-Stop Operator and Job Service Office manager. Letters include analyses of several partnerships with partner programs, including co-enrollment of JVSG into Title I programs, SCSEP participation, Reemployment Services Eligibility and Assessment (RESEA) scheduled and completed, and several others identified in Oversight and Monitoring Policy 6.7. Upon satisfactory compliance with the findings has been identified, a four-year certification is sought by the Workforce Development Council.

*(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.*

The Workforce Development Council has certified all Job Service Offices since this process was implemented. Common findings from recent reviews have included:

- Ensuring case notes are timely and descriptive of the service to improve data validation results.
- Ensuring Intake and Orientation forms are completed with a customer and included in their file.
- Ensuring Selective Service verification, as applicable, is in the customer's file.
- Completing a subsequent review with Reemployment Services Eligibility and Assessment (RESEA) customers that are on the program longer than a month.
- Complete basic skills deficiency assessments within 60 days of enrollment if this wasn't completed six months prior to enrollment. This assists in achieving priority of service for the adult program and also helps establish a viable employment plan with customers.
- Establishing progressive employment plans with customers
- As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) review, there have been a variety of physical access compliance issues that have been identified and resolved.

It is encouraging and important to note that since the implementation of this process, the findings have been gradually decreasing.

As part of South Dakota's commitment to continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making, the Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) conducted two key evaluations to assess the effectiveness of core WIOA programs and partner services. These assessments focused on the impact of co-enrollment strategies for TANF participants and the outcomes of short-term training programs for incarcerated individuals preparing for reentry into the workforce. Both evaluations provide valuable insights into how integrated service delivery and targeted interventions can improve employment outcomes for priority populations.

The first evaluation stemmed from DLR's participation in the Applied Data Analytics training course in January 2024, hosted by the Coleridge Initiative, the State of Arkansas, NASWA, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. During this course, DLR analyzed de-identified data and found that TANF participants who co-enrolled in WIOA Title I achieved higher employment outcomes than those who were not co-enrolled. Building on this insight, DLR conducted a state-level analysis of TANF work-ready participants who exited WIOA Title I and Title III programs between January 1 and December 31, 2022.

Participants were grouped into those enrolled solely in Title III (111 individuals) and those co-enrolled in both Title I and Title III (164 individuals). The analysis revealed that individuals co-enrolled in Title I achieved a second and fourth quarter after-exit employment rate of 56.1%, while those enrolled only in Title III had a second quarter rate of 41.8% and a fourth quarter rate of 48.2%. Notably, co-enrolled participants maintained consistent employment across both

quarters, suggesting job retention and stability. In contrast, while Title III-only participants showed some improvement by the fourth quarter, their outcomes remained lower overall.

The second evaluation focused on DLR's reentry initiative, which provides short-term, job-ready training to incarcerated individuals in partnership with technical colleges and the South Dakota Department of Corrections. To assess the impact of these services, DLR compared outcomes between a test group of 64 individuals who received training and a control group of 64 individuals released during the same period who did not receive DLR-funded training. Both groups were balanced by gender and evaluated based on exits from prison or WIOA programs between March 31, 2022, and June 30, 2023.

Results showed that the DLR test group had a second quarter after-exit employment rate of 60.94%, significantly higher than the control group's 45.31%. By the fourth quarter, the test group maintained a strong employment rate of 59.38%, compared to 42.19% for the control group. These differences, 15.63 and 17.19 percentage points respectively, demonstrate the positive impact of pre-release training on employment outcomes for returning citizens.

In addition to employment rates, the evaluation also examined earnings. The DLR test group achieved a median income of \$6,622.07 in the second quarter after exit, which was \$2,629.57 higher than the control group's median earnings of \$3,992.50. These results suggest that the training not only helped participants secure employment but also contributed to greater economic stability and earning potential post-release.

Together, these evaluations underscore the effectiveness of South Dakota's workforce strategies in supporting individuals with barriers to employment. Whether through co-enrollment in WIOA Title I or targeted reentry training, the data clearly show that integrated, participant-focused services lead to better employment outcomes. These findings will inform future program design and reinforce the importance of collaboration across core and partner programs in achieving the goals of the WIOA Combined State Plan.

(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)).*

DLR's Workforce Data team conducts WIOA evaluations in-house using a quasi-experimental method. DLR utilizes mandatory performance outcomes such as employment rate, second quarter after exit, and median earnings, second quarter after exit, as well as other indicators captured on the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) to determine effectiveness. As DLR continues to build service delivery models and new partnerships, Labor Program Specialists and the Workforce Data Team will focus evaluation efforts on assessing the effectiveness of new models and partnerships.

DLR's Workforce Data team reviews federal and other evaluations from reputable evaluators when they become available. The team then provides recommendations to leadership teams and how such change can be implemented in South Dakota.

The Workforce Data team is also heavily involved in preemptively reviewing Title I and III Quarterly Reports to provide insights on the current state of programs. When the Quarterly Report Analysis (QRA) is received from the U.S. DOL Regional office, the data team conducts an in-depth analysis. Trends are shared with Labor Program Specialists during one-on-one meetings, where the data team can also lead brainstorming activities to address negative trends while highlighting positive ones.

(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),

DLR Job Service Offices serve as the provider of WIOA Title I Youth services. DLR does not have contracts or agreements for the provision of youth services. DLR partners with various training providers, businesses, and support service providers to meet the needs of our customers and make the 14 youth elements available.

The DLR Administrative Services Division identifies available funding for Title I Youth participants and distributes it into four budgets: In-School Work Experience and Out-of-School Work Experience (count toward 20% of the work experience expenditure rate), In-School Other and Out-of-School Other (do not count toward the 20% work experience expenditure rate). This enables DLR to track funding spent on Out-of-School Youth and work experiences. These are budgets that all Job Service Offices can access. The SDWORKS management information system is used by employment specialists in the Job Service Offices to obligate funding and Job Service Office managers to approve payments. The Administrative Services Division then utilizes this information to ensure fiscal compliance, provide final payment approval, and process payments. In addition, the State Time Keeping System allows for various time codes for staff to track their time appropriately to activities and grants. This allows the agency to appropriately track the time staff spend on In-School Youth, Out-of-School Youth, and work experiences.

- (ii) **Adult and training activities** in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3),

- (iii) **Dislocated worker employment and training activities** in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned.

DLR Job Service Offices serve as the provider of WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker services. DLR does not have contracts or agreements for the provision of career services. DLR partners with various training providers, businesses, and support service providers to meet the needs of our customers and make the full array of individualized training and support services available.

Based on the grant award for the **Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker** programs, the Administrative Services Division identifies funding available for participants statewide. These are budgets that all Job Service Offices can access. The SDWORKS management information system is used by employment specialists in the Job Service Offices to obligate funding and Job Service Office managers to approve payments. The Administrative Services Division then utilizes this information to ensure fiscal compliance, provide final payment approval, and process payments.

DLR enrolls all individuals who can provide authorization to work in the United States and, if applicable, Selective Service registration, and who were referred to the WIOA Title I Adult program from one of our partner programs. Referrals allow DLR to focus on a priority service for adults who are basic skills deficient, receiving public assistance, or low-income, and for veterans. Funding is reserved for those who meet this priority of service or identify as an ex-offender, lack a high school diploma, and are working with a WIOA partner program. This change went into effect in Program Year 2023 due to limited funding. These populations were identified to support partnerships with other service agencies, including the Department of Corrections and WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy. In addition, funding through the Dislocated Worker program is limited to individuals receiving services through the RESEA or TAA programs. Focusing on populations working in partnership with a partner agency provides opportunities for cost-sharing of services. Additional information about this priority of service and funding eligibility can be found in the Eligibility and Priority of Service Policy 4.1.

Transfer of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker budgets, as identified in Policy 3.10, is helpful by allowing the state to serve the population with the greatest need with financial resources.

(B) For Title II:

(i) Describe the methods and factors the eligible agency will use to distribute Title II funds.

DLR held its most recent AEFLA grant competition in spring 2022 to determine the distribution of Title II funds. Because South Dakota is a single-area state, the Title II funds are made available to any eligible provider serving any of South Dakota's 66 counties. This current multi-year grant cycle began July 1, 2022, in accordance with South Dakota's State Plan and the federal provisions regulating WIOA's direct and equitable access—WIOA Section 231; this grant cycle is scheduled for four (4) years, through PY2025-26. The agency anticipates the release of another request for proposal in 2026.

The methodology used by DLR to allocate funds prioritizes each proposal's service-area needs, scope, goals, efficacy, inclusion of special populations, and potential levels of student-access. A "modified foundation formula" is thereby applied to assist with the allocation; this formula factors in a base-funding amount by students' program type, with the aforementioned priorities, and then accounts for a provider's geographic location(s).

DLR is responsible for determining whether an Applicant is deemed an "eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness"; therefore, as part of its grant competition, each Applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy. This effectiveness must be demonstrated in the following content domains: Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition. An Applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

The Agency's WIOA Title II Request for Proposal articulates these thresholds of Demonstrated Effectiveness for both incumbent Applicants and new Applicants; those Applicants subsequently determined "eligible" continue in the review process.

(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.

DLR announces the availability of funds on its organizational website, through South Dakota's procurement portal, via Public Notice in major newspapers, and direct email. Such emails are sent to current local program providers, networks of community partners, and any entities which expressed interest during the previous grant cycle(s). All Applicants receive the same instructions and information prior to submission; additionally, all eligible proposals are reviewed and scored in a consistent manner. All relevant materials are also posted on DLR's WIOA Sub-Recipient webpage, including the Scoring Rubric and the Response to Written Inquiries.

(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.

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Services grant is drawn down by DHS. Funds are distributed with 80% going to the Division of Rehabilitation Services and 20% to the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired through mutual agreement regarding the distribution of funds.

(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 post-secondary 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.
- (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.
- (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.
- (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)).

Interoperable Systems

Primary operating system efforts are focused on developing a client-centric supply system to engage individuals, connect them to available services and resources, and facilitate their employment goals. SDWORKS (Titles I and III), FACES (Title IV), and LACES (Title II) are the three WIOA data management systems used by the South Dakota core programs.

For Titles I & III, SDWORKS is an integrated system that completely manages all state and federal workforce programs. Several components are available to help coordinate program activities, drive program outcomes, and maximize staff productivity.

The Wagner-Peyser case management module in SDWORKS is designed to help staff provide labor exchange assistance to individuals who need it the most, as well as gather the necessary data needed to report on these services. The system is fully compliant with federal reporting and data-collection requirements under WIOA. The system automatically creates the Wagner-Peyser application during system registration and collects information about the registered individual. This allows the system to record services deemed appropriate under the guidance as general information services available to all individuals.

Authorized staff have the ability to track services funded through special grants, including the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSF) program. The system provides ease of tracking and reporting of services provided to eligible participants under guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Labor.

When establishing Jobs for Veterans State Grants and/or Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs, Wagner-Peyser eligibility is automatically established. Following state policy, the individual is placed into performance with customer groups and services based on their eligibility.

The WIOA case management module provides workforce staff with the flexibility to enter and share information about participants receiving services and is fully compliant with federal requirements and specified business rules. Data points required by partner programs for case management and WIOA reporting are collected through a Common Intake. This allows staff to record information required by multiple programs using a single application to determine a participant's program eligibility and appropriate services needed. The system drives collaboration and improved performance for partner programs and includes the capability to capture all required data for WIOA and Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) reporting.

Staff can manage and assist individuals in their eligibility determination and enrollment in multiple programs. The system has a customized online registration that provides specific federal and state data elements and assists in determining program eligibility, processing enrollment, and tracking activities.

The WIOA case management module offers fully-integrated report design, distribution, and management functionality in compliance with state and federal requirements. The system also meets the PIRL requirements established by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Under revised Memorandums of Understanding and Data-Sharing Agreements, core program providers have and continue to develop and implement interfaces and data-sharing processes between Title I/III and our Title II and Title IV partners, to assist each partner with eligibility determination and federal reporting.

DLR's Workforce and Reemployment Assistance (RA) systems leverage Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to streamline and secure the exchange of critical claimant information across platforms. These APIs enable real-time data sharing between the RA Benefits system and SDWORKS, allowing for seamless updates on claimant status, such as eligibility determinations, benefit payments, and participation in reemployment services. Case notes entered by workforce staff are transmitted via APIs to ensure continuity of service and compliance tracking. Additionally, APIs facilitate the reporting of claimant job contacts, ensuring that job search activities are accurately recorded and accessible for both eligibility reviews and performance reporting. This integration enhances efficiency, reduces manual data entry, and supports a more coordinated approach to helping claimants return to work.

Data Governance Efforts

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) is establishing a Data Governance Steering Committee (DGSC) to lead and coordinate data governance efforts across all divisions, including Workforce Services and Workforce Development. The DGSC will:

- Develop and enforce data governance policies and procedures.
- Define data ownership and stewardship roles across programs.
- Promote data integrity, security, and compliance with federal and state regulations.
- Facilitate collaboration across divisions to improve data sharing, reporting, and decision-making.
- Support integration of data systems to streamline reporting and reduce duplication.
- Govern data-sharing agreements and privacy protections, particularly for participant-level data.

Streamlined Service Delivery

DLR utilizes **SDWORKS**, a Geographic Solutions, Inc. (GeoSol, Inc.) Virtual One-Stop System, to capture business and client activities and services provided throughout the agency. The system serves as the primary data collection point for reporting Title I and Title III data and performance measures under WIOA, and integrates labor market information directly to assist seekers, employers, and others in determining in-demand jobs.

The demand indicator is based on a methodology that ranks all South Dakota jobs based on future growth and wages. Rankings and information are updated quarterly using demand and wage data. While traditional time-lagged data can be used to identify current and future job demand and the skills associated with those jobs, it often provides broad, general education and skill requirements and can be slow to highlight new and emerging job categories. SDWORKS has available real-time data obtained from analyzing current job postings, employer engagement, and modelling tools that include forward-looking data. This information helps identify projected future skill gaps. Educational and training institutions can use the data to provide programs to meet forecasted workforce needs.

Data points required by partner programs for Wagner-Peyser and WIOA case management and reporting are collected through a Common Intake. This allows staff to record information required by multiple programs using a single application to determine a participant's program eligibility and appropriate services needed. The system drives collaboration and improved performance across partner programs and enables the capture of all required data for WIOA and Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) reporting.

Under revised Memorandums of Understanding and Data-Sharing Agreements, core program providers have and continue to develop and implement interfaces and data-sharing processes between Title I/III and our Title II and Title IV partners, to assist each partner with eligibility determination and federal reporting.

In partnership with the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications, DLR plans to seek assistance to implement a customer-friendly intake and orientation system. This system will allow customers to share their private information in a

comfortable, confidential environment of their choosing at a time that is convenient for them. After hearing about the workforce system, customers will be able to securely provide their eligibility data and documentation, sign necessary forms and authorizations, access workforce services available on demand, and, if additional assistance is needed, schedule with a DLR staff member.

Workforce Development Council Assistance

System improvements for SDWORKS are ongoing. DLR's SDWORKS system includes modules for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), which has eliminated duplication of processes and potential human error while streamlining communication and collection of required performance data elements. The improved ability to export performance data for the WIPS report and monitor program performance is more efficient and allows DLR to make stronger recommendations for program approval to the WDC.

DLR has also added the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program registration and tracking application as a module within SDWORKS. This integration allows the addition of features such as online registration and transactions, greatly improving application processing efficiency, and is a more efficient utilization of staff time. As part of this project, additional data-sharing interfaces with partner programs will be utilized.

The Board recognizes the value of coordinated systems. At the same time, it is challenging to create a single system from three distinct systems already in place across the four core programs, given limited budgets.

To facilitate partnership and coordination of services, DLR is in discussions with our partners at DSS to pool resources and possibly add a module to SDWORKS for SNAP Employment and Training, as well as TANF. This would allow DLR to better track referrals between partners and the services provided.

Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) uses VR FACES as the case management system. This system follows the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case service process. VR FACES collects required data on VR applicants and clients necessary for required reporting to the US Department of Education/Rehabilitation Services Administration. The VR FACES is designed for tracking Social Security/Ticket to Work activities and consumer satisfaction results. The system is designed to generate quality assurance reports and incorporates annual case file reviews. The VR FACES integrates Social Security benefits and unemployment wage records for each VR participant.

Further integration of state services not directly associated with the Titles under WIOA is being continuously added through a Governor's initiative, the "South Dakota Digital Citizen Portal" (DCP). The Board is fully supportive of this effort. The intent of DCP is to help all state agencies, including Boards, Commissions, social services programs, other assistive agency programs, etc., participate on one website with one sign-in for all state services (Single Sign-On or SSO). This is a long-term project with scores of applications and forms from state agencies available to South Dakota citizens for their convenience. Additional services are being added to the secure platform monthly, with the goal of making all state-provided services available on the portal over the next few years. The mission of the DCP is 'Citizen First' to ensure effective communication, a consistent experience, the shortest possible critical path, and mobile friendliness.

Required Reporting

Each of the three WIOA data management systems used by South Dakota's core programs for data collection can record and track all activities and services. Data is derived from customer self-service, staff entry, and system interfaces that integrate partner systems and vendor-custom applications. Core programs should work together seamlessly. DLR and DHS are working on an ongoing basis to modify SDWORKS, LACES, and VR FACES to communicate through interface methodologies. These interfaces share information about participants' involvement in each other's programs and services, helping the WIOA core programs better communicate and coordinate services. This collaboration ties the legacy systems together without sacrificing staff experience and comfort levels. DLR and DHS will work to ensure

appropriate system integration and data sharing to align resources, improve reporting processes and outcomes, and enhance the consumer experience across all WIOA core programs.

All services and data-collection elements for all core and partner programs are based on the Participant Individualized Record Layout (PIRL), so advances in collection and reporting interfaces will continue to streamline future reporting requirements, enhance data integrity, and provide a shareable database between partners to review for specific data analysis and research.

DLR's Data Team works to cross-match Title II data from LACES when allowed by federal requirements. Cross-matches include collecting participation information, informing Title II providers of potential co-enrolled participants, and sharing known employment information.

In terms of supporting coordinated implementation of State strategies, the Title II Program frequently provides various reports (e.g., Barriers to Employment, Measurable Skill Gains, Scale Scores, High School Equivalencies, Contact-Hours) to Titles I and III, both at the State/Agency level and the Local Office level; these reports are aggregate, provider-specific, or even individual student records. To a lesser extent, the local AEFLA sub-recipients also provide requested data to Title IV for case management of customers who are co-enrolled. Title II's shared reports and custom views are used for research and analyses, program evaluation, case-management, data quality, and monitoring purposes. The Title II Program even provides Local One-Stop Staff with electronic screenshots of necessary data or outcomes for archival [as part of the Data Validation protocol]; of course, these screenshots, like all other similar correspondence, are sent in an encrypted format.

*(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 post-secondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional performance indicators.*

DLR conducts follow-up for four quarters following a participant's exit from the program. DLR's Data team utilizes system reports from our Management Information System, SDWORKS, to develop a performance management list. These lists identify participants who need post-program outcomes, such as measurable skills gains or credentials. DLR's Data team also crossmatches exited participants to verifiable national and reporting systems, such as SWIS, National Student Clearinghouse, and state Reemployment Assistance wage records. These verifiable crossmatches are then uploaded or manually entered into SDWORKS to ensure South Dakota has the most accurate performance.

*(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.)*

The DLR Reemployment Assistance (RA) Division is the designated UI agency for South Dakota and required One-Stop partner (section 121(b)(1)(B)(xi), WIOA). This wage data, including South Dakota data and other state wage data through SWIS, is:

Accurate – related to the collection and use of wage records to determine performance accountability, data validation of cases, and evaluating the effectiveness of the cases and their outcomes is much higher and reliable than relying upon self-reported data collection, such as graduate, employer, or job seeker surveys.

Accessible – The broad coverage of UI wages and their associated data collection is estimated at 99.7% of all wage and salary earners and 89% of the total civilian labor force (self-employed individuals account for the difference). This is according to the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. Congress. The UI reporting system provides easy access to the

required data for almost every WIOA participant in a performance-based program. Other state initiatives can also use the data, provided the scope and content of the data collected and publicized meet applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Longitudinal – States are required to maintain the most recent two years of data elements online to support the administration of UI claims. Many states have a longer retention rate than two years, and as a result, quarterly UI wage data can be linked to create a longitudinal record of earnings.

The cost-effectiveness of using UI wage data is appealing to states operating under budget constraints. Generally, the cost of a state to access and parse UI wage record data to determine outcomes and performance measures of WIOA participants.

*(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.*

DLR follows the Workforce Program Privacy Policy 3.5. When appropriate, DLR enters into data share agreements with other workforce programs to assist with data collection. However, this is done in compliance with appropriate privacy laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

To ensure the Personal Identifiable Information (PII) collected in SDWORKS is protected, security measures have been implemented. These measures include limiting physical access to the database servers, installing electronic security using SSL encryption, and individual password protection to guard against unauthorized access for all accounts. Only the user or third parties the user has authorized can access the account information. Users should log off and close their web browser when a session is complete to prevent unauthorized access to account information. Voluntarily disclosing PII, usernames, e-mail addresses, or messages from SDWORKS may result in unsolicited messages from other individuals or third parties. Such activities are beyond the control of the SDWORKS system and DLR.

The SDWORKS website provides links to navigate a user to other websites, which may have their own information collection practices, privacy policies and security measures. Visitors to other websites from SDWORKS should review the privacy policies and information collection practices of those websites.

South Dakota has a Compulsory School Attendance law that requires school attendance until age 18; therefore, WIOA Title II does not serve individuals below age 18 who are enrolled in a public school. Still, Adult Education remains cognizant of FERPA rights (e.g., handling an adult's IEP documentation or 504 Plan from the K-12 system), as well as privacy rights for all students. The primary means by which WIOA Title II and its subrecipients safeguard student records is by collecting/reporting data only for eligible adults who sign the Student Intake Form's Release of Information.

Additionally, Adult Education uses Voltage encryption when sharing sensitive information or PII; however, we have reduced our reliance on encryption due to the Agency's broader use of SharePoint technologies. The Department of Labor and Regulation has a landing page and folders/subfolders specifically for its six (6) AEFLA subrecipients to submit financial vouchers, reports, desk-monitoring documentation, and partner communication. All these sites have fully controlled permissions, with only the necessary staff receiving respective access. For maintenance, South Dakota's AEFLA contact-lists [for SharePoint and Title II's MIS] are updated at least quarterly to confirm active and inactive users.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) divisions are covered entities under HIPAA and are therefore bound by HIPAA privacy and security guidelines. Strenuous privacy safeguards are built into the VR case management system to protect PII; for example, audit tables are used to track staff viewings of data pages on the system.

(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.*

DLR has implemented processes for veterans and eligible spouses (covered persons) to self-identify as eligible for priority of service at the point of entry in a DLR job service office, via the DLR website, or through other electronic means. Covered persons are given priority over non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement of services in all programs, whether funded in whole or in part by the U.S. DOL and are entitled to the precedence and/or access over non-covered persons for services. DLR has prioritized efforts to identify and engage veterans and their spouses with the use of signage on entrance doors, colorful floor mats informing them of priority of service for all funded programs, floor banners, table-top banners, and job service television monitors which display information on priority of service and encourage military members, spouses, and veterans to check on priority of service with the local office staff. Additionally, DLR job service office staff have been trained to assist customers in determining covered persons and other eligible persons' status as part of a triage process. Once identified as a covered person under Priority of Service, the non-JVSG staff will provide this covered person with information on all services available to them through the Job Service Office (AJC), and they will proceed accordingly. This could include information on WIOA, Re-employment Assistance (UI) referral information, Wagner-Peyser services, State Vocational Rehabilitation services, Registered Apprenticeship and referral, and JVSG services as determined by the triage process by non-JVSG staff, etc.

According to 38 USC 4103A(a), services to eligible veterans must be in the following priority order:

- First: to special disabled veterans (30% disability and higher);
- Second: to other disabled veterans; and
- Third: to other eligible veterans.

To implement the priority of service, a broader definition of veteran is used. Under this definition, the term “veteran” means a person who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Active service includes full-time federal service in the National Guard or Reserve component. This definition of “active service” does not include full-time duty performed strictly for training purposes (such as weekend or annual training), nor does it include full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel who are mobilized by State rather than Federal Authorities (such as natural disasters).

The ***definition of a covered person*** includes a spouse of any of the following:

- Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability.
- Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been listed for a total of more than 90 days:
 1. Missing in action;
 2. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or
 3. Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power;
- Any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or

- Any veteran who died while a disability (as defined above) was in existence.

Note: an example of priority of service would include “a covered person seeking to use the job service office computer lab and would have first priority of a computer over any non-covered customers also waiting to use a computer in the computer lab.”

(B) Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans.

The DLR JVSG Program Coordinator will provide guidelines and assistance to ensure priority of service by:

- Serving as the point of contact for all Triage self-assessment priority of service questions from field staff;
- Providing updated Triage Form information to simplify this form and provide in-person and virtual training as needed and requested by Job Service Offices.
- Maintaining contact, in-person or electronically, with DLR Job Service Offices to ensure Priority of Service signage and other self-identification materials for “covered persons” are placed properly in the DLR Job Service Offices to promote and encourage customers to self-identify for priority of service;
- Using federal reporting and other SDWORKS reporting to try and keep a running total of verified covered persons and services provided by DLR.

Priority of Service for covered persons must be provided by all Job Service non-JVSG staff in all functions of the Job Service Office where Priority of Service for this veteran is indicated. Priority of Service for certain training programs and services where specific eligibility is used will be discussed with non-JVSG staff and the program or service specified.

(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.

To ensure DLR provides the best employment services possible for eligible veterans and eligible persons under JVSG, a VETS – Initial Assessment (Triage Form) is completed by non-JVSG staff to determine a job seeker’s eligibility for JVSG employment services.

DLR uses the Triage Form to determine Priority of Service status for covered persons as noted above, determines veterans' status as recognized by U.S. DOL, DVOP/CP eligibility status for JVSG eligible veterans, and eligible persons (which may include spouses, transitioning service members, wounded, ill, or injured service members and their caretakers).

The Triage Form assessment is completed using the most current eligibility guidance provided in Veterans’ Program Letters from the U.S. DOL, identifying eligible veterans and eligible persons with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) and other Authorized Populations, as determined by the U.S. Department of Labor Secretary. After eligibility is determined, a referral is made by a non-JVSG staff member to a JVSG Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist or Consolidated Position (CP) specialist for assessment and intensive deployment of required employment services. This would include JVSG-eligible veterans, spouses, and other eligible persons who are unemployed or facing numerous employment barriers to seeking and/or retaining suitable employment. DVOP/CP specialists have specialized training from the National Veterans’ Training Institute (NVTI) to assist eligible veterans and eligible persons in overcoming identified barriers to employment that may be preventing them from seeking and obtaining gainful employment. The individual determined eligible for JVSG services will receive Individualized Career Services (ICS) based on an Objective Assessment that provides a comprehensive whole person concept, an Employment Plan which includes steps and goals to eliminate each barrier that impedes the seeking and obtainment of gainful employment and provides

consistent contact with the veteran or eligible person to foster mutual respect and ownership of the employment plan for the eligible participant.

(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 must also include a description of compliance through staff training and support to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

DLR is seeking a website developer to help the agency comply with the upcoming Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

DLR staff are invited to attend Vocational Rehabilitation's annual conference each fall. In addition, joint training sessions may be offered throughout the year, including during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In addition, DLR has compiled resources available to staff, as well as information on its public webpage for individuals with disabilities or employers. In addition to a couple of videos, there are links to resources such as the LEAD Center, JAN (Job Accommodation Network), the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS), and the University of South Dakota (USD) Center for Disabilities. Each year, DLR staff must complete annual inclusivity training on accommodations for individuals with disabilities, per Workforce Program Accommodations Policy 5.9.

Each DLR job service office receives an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance review once every three years at a minimum as part of the One-Stop System Policy 3.2. The user uses the ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities at ADAchecklist.org, based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. During the review, each applicable section is scored for compliance with a "yes" or "no." All "no" responses are documented with photos and then addressed in an action plan to bring the section into compliance. All "no" responses are categorized by low, moderate, and high effort. The action plan includes a timeline to correct any long-term deficiencies. Most of the physical findings need to be resolved by the landlord. DLR notifies the landlord of the deficiencies and begins negotiations to address the issues. An Equal Opportunity monitor is also conducted during this review, in accordance with Element Seven of the Nondiscrimination Plan.

After the review, a letter identifying the findings, areas of concern, and promising practices is developed and sent to the One-Stop Operator and the One-Stop Career Center manager. They have 45 days to respond to the findings. Once findings have been resolved, they are shared with the Workforce Development Council for consideration of certification. At the conclusion of each ADA review, the reviewer recaps the findings with the office manager and staff are given directions on actions they can take immediately to temporarily remediate issues (if any) until a permanent resolution is put in place. The previous finding reports are reviewed when the next ADA review is completed for each office.

(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.

Limited English proficient (LEP) individuals must be able to access and participate in WIOA programs and activities in a manner that is equally consistent and effective with that offered to those proficient in English. One-Stop Career Centers and partners take reasonable steps to ensure LEP individuals receive the language assistance necessary to afford them

meaningful access to the programs, services, and information, free of charge. DLR has a Language Assistance Plan (LAP) that outlines how DLR will meet these requirements.

DLR contracts with CTS Language Link Services of Vancouver, WA, to provide over-the-phone interpretation services to LEP individuals. For program year 2022, DLR used Language Link Services 1,086 times, with 83% (903) being for Spanish interpretation.

Additionally, DLR created new Babel Notices for Field Operations, Reemployment Assistance, and the Division of Human Rights. The Babel Notices include the top five languages requested from Language Link at the time the Language Assistance Plan was written. The needs assessment for the top-requested languages is evaluated every two years.

As part of DLR's CAREER National Dislocated Worker Grant that South Dakota received in 2021, DLR indicated the need to increase technology efforts for translation. With assistance from this grant, DLR implemented Translate Live, which offers a device called ILA that provides immediate translation when an individual comes into our offices. "ILA is the first language communication solution that allows people to easily and instantly have a real-time, natural back-and-forth conversation, no matter the language, disability, device or location. Using the All-In-One ILA Pro Device, users can speak, spell out loud, or type, and the entire conversation is immediately communicated to the other party in their chosen language."

South Dakota DLR also implemented a translation hub for document translation. This hub will enable instantaneous document translation, integrate a human into the loop to identify and fix common translation issues, and even customize the translation of specific industry acronyms. This has allowed DLR to translate standard policies, forms, and outreach materials.

To ensure staff can provide equal services to LEP individuals, DLR provides technical assistance and training. A PowerPoint presentation and recorded training on delivering services to Limited English Proficient individuals is available during staff onboarding. The resource page also provides guidance on how to use Language Link, as well as the link to DLR's Language Assistance Plan.

Annual reviews, conducted by the Equal Opportunity Officer, ensure each One-Stop Career Center is compliant with WIOA section 188 and 29 CFR 38. These reviews, similar to the ADA process, take place during the One-Stop Certification a minimum of every three years. LEP is covered in the monitoring process, during the employee interviews, and during the Equal Opportunity data analysis. Each of these aspects is also outlined in the DLR Nondiscrimination Plan.

IV. COORDINATION WITH COMBINED 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.*

A single statewide board, the Workforce Development Council, creates an environment for streamlined coordination among the core partners. The board hears testimony from WIOA core programs, required partner programs, and participants or businesses impacted by these programs throughout the year. In addition, they visit facilities on-site during face-to-face meetings.

The annual Governor's Office of Economic Development conference includes Workforce Development Council Members, representatives of the Governor's Office, all WIOA core and required partners, post-secondary training providers, local economic development organizations, business representatives, and legislators. During this meeting,

information is shared and collected on promising practices, challenges, successes, partners' existing and planned efforts, state economic and labor information, and more. This meeting offers a space to identify upcoming priorities and areas for coordinated collaboration.

Locally, agency partner meetings take place at least quarterly. These meetings allow for networking among community partners. Agenda items typically include informational sessions on various resources, policy changes, service gaps, and strategic partnerships.

At the participant level, DLR and others have embraced the Integrated Resource Teams model. This pulls together people representing the various programs, resources, and natural supports a customer can benefit from. These meetings allow for coordination and communication between service providers to ensure a customer's needs are being met and services are not duplicated.

Where feasible, partners collaborate on staff training by implementing workforce programs that offer networking opportunities and improve familiarity with services, resources, and professional knowledge.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (for all core programs)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

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;
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;
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 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;
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;
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);
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
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;
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);
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and

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.

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC STATE PLAN 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.

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.***

South Dakota is a single-area state with one state board. The Workforce Development Council (WDC) provides guidance and direction for the entire state.

(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 local boards and chief elected officials to identify the regions.***

South Dakota is a single-area state with one state board. The Workforce Development Council (WDC) provides guidance and direction for the entire state.

(C) ***Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to the designation of local areas.***

South Dakota is a single-area state with one state board. The Workforce Development Council (WDC) provides guidance and direction for the entire state.

(D) ***Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.***

All Parties will actively participate in a good-faith effort to reach an agreement. Disputes between Parties will be attempted to be resolved informally. If no resolution is reached, the Parties will send a written letter to the Executive Director of the WDC. The Executive Director will have 10 days to acknowledge receipt of the dispute and transmit the letter to the Council members. The WDC then has 30 business days to convene and hear testimony from all Parties involved in the dispute. After hearing testimony, WDC has an additional 30 business days to issue a formal resolution for the issue. The WDC Chair will issue the final resolution.

(2) Statewide Activities.

(A) ***Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for the use of State funds for workforce investment activities.***

DLR follows WIOA guidance on the required and allowable activities for **statewide funding**. The DLR Cabinet Secretary reviews all requests and provides the final determination. Allowable funding determinations are based on the Governor’s priorities. Statewide funds will be utilized for:

- Data management system updates and maintenance;
- Data analysis system updates and maintenance;
- Monitoring and oversight;
- Evaluations;
- Training;
- Rapid Response activities; and
- The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

DLR Statewide funding may support efforts related to (this is a comprehensive list):

- Providing the opportunity for individuals to take the National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC™);
- Incumbent Worker Training;
- Activities to develop youth career knowledge, such as work-based learning connections;
- Public outreach.

The DLR Administrative Services Division provides oversight of this funding. All state and federal procurement laws, policies, and procedures are adhered to. Subrecipient agreements are monitored based on risk assessments in accordance with Subrecipient Management Policy 6.16.

(B) Describe how the State intends to use the 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.

WIOA statewide funding is utilized to support DLR's SDWORKS management information system, job data bank, and virtual interviewing software; computer system licenses for virtual job fair software; maintenance of Job Service computers for participant use, and additional technological improvements to the delivery of services to make staff more efficient and provide better services to participants and the public. When conducting formal monitoring, evaluations, training, and administrative activities, state-level program staff charge time to the statewide timecodes. If formal contracts are established to conduct assessments or training courses, these are also funded through statewide funding. In addition, any costs related to Rapid Response activities, such as outreach, facilities (if needed), or staff time, are incorporated into the statewide funding stream. Additional information regarding Rapid Response efforts is under (C) below. Time spent maintaining the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), including reporting, is funded through this funding stream. Funding is also utilized for the WorkKeys® Curriculum™ to prepare participants to take the GED.

Discretionary activities are reviewed and approved by the Cabinet Secretary annually, prior to renewing any commitments to service providers.

(C) Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to aid companies quickly and their affected workers. States should also describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at-risk companies and workers.

The state reserves funds specifically to provide layoff aversion and rapid response activities. Rapid Response Funds can be used for pre-layoff activities such as pre-planning sessions, information sessions, on-site resource rooms, off-site meeting rooms, advertising to alert impacted workers, etc.

South Dakota recently implemented a virtual job fair platform as a strategy to reach skilled workers when a layoff or closure is imminent or has already occurred. This platform connects employers and job seekers in real time by enabling text chat between the two, which may lead to a video or in-person interview. Affected workers can view upcoming virtual job fairs and register for them online.

South Dakota's policy is to engage with businesses within two days of receiving any indication of a potential layoff or closure. Comprehensive information about DLR's services is shared with both company leadership and employees. **Rapid**

Response meetings can occur at the workplace, the closest job service office, or an off-site location. Community partners who provide various services are invited to attend the Rapid Response meeting and present details about their programs to the affected workers. Informational and direct re-employment services for workers include items such as:

- Information and support for filing reemployment assistance (RA) benefits,
- information on the impacts of layoffs on health coverage and other benefits,
- information on and referrals to career and training services,
- re-employment-focused workshops and services.

Recognizing the need to connect with individuals about layoff assistance resources, DLR's Rapid Response team has initiated monthly webinars. During these webinars, attendees are informed about reemployment assistance benefits and available workforce services.

Building and maintaining relationships with the business community is critical to the implementation of layoff aversion strategies. Regional DLR staff typically have established relationships with local businesses, which allow for early warning of potential layoffs and provide an opportunity for early intervention to help avert a layoff through services, including Registered Apprenticeships. DLR will soon launch incumbent worker training to help businesses upskill their existing workforce, aiming to avoid layoffs and improve competitiveness.

Layoff aversion strategies and activities prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment resulting from layoffs and may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing assistance to employers in managing reductions in force, which may include early identification of firms at risk of layoffs, assessment of the needs of and options for at-risk firms, and the delivery of services to address those needs.
- Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building activities with businesses in the community, in order to create an environment for successful layoff aversion efforts and to enable the provision of assistance to dislocated workers in obtaining new employment as soon as possible.
- Establishing linkages with economic development entities, including local business retention and expansion activities.
- Connecting businesses and workers to short-term, on-the-job, or apprenticeships before or after layoff to help facilitate employment.

(D) Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters, including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

In the event of a natural disaster, such as a tornado, flood, earthquake, drought, or storm, emergency rapid response will mobilize to efficiently organize services. This effort aims to bring together dedicated partners committed to helping the community navigate challenging circumstances and mitigate the immediate effects of the disaster. The coordination process may involve collaboration with state and local emergency management teams as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Additionally, Emergency Operation Centers could be established to facilitate these efforts. On-site Job Service office staff will be available to assist individuals in accessing reemployment assistance benefits or disaster unemployment assistance (if applicable), and to connect them with other relevant state and local organizations.

(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 services to workers in the groups identified in the petition (TAA Sec. 221(a)(2)(A)).

South Dakota is a small state, and not all closures or layoffs are covered by the federal WARN Act. Typically, layoff information is communicated by the business itself or by local entities such as the Chamber of Commerce or economic development and relayed to the Rapid Response Coordinator. Once information about a closure or layoff is received, the business is contacted within approximately 24 hours.

When possible, the Rapid Response Team will meet with employers to assist in planning a Rapid Response event. The initial meeting identifies the services to be offered, as well as the event dates and location. The team, which is comprised of job service managers, the labor program specialist, Business Services team members, Reemployment Assistance Division staff, and sometimes the Restart team members, will provide information to the impacted workers regarding workforce services available to them, including training opportunities, supportive services, etc. In addition, information regarding Reemployment Assistance benefits and benefits resources is shared.

As of July 1, 2022, the TAA Program entered phaseout termination. This prohibits the Office of Trade Adjustment from certifying any petitions. Since the phaseout termination has been in effect for the last four years, funding for affected workers has significantly decreased, making it difficult to implement the program and provide training for potential workers.

There is no pending legislation to reauthorize the TAA Program. Trade-affected workers who request assistance may receive funding through the TAA program when available, but also be considered for assistance through the WIOA Dislocated Worker program. No new TAA petitions are being approved, so as potential affected workers seek assistance, they are provided information on the trade petition and services available based on the petition number.

At the time the petition is certified, the State will try to provide notice to those covered by the petition by mail, email, social media, and newspapers of general circulation in the area where the workers reside. The notices will describe the benefits available to workers to request, along with dates, times, and locations for in-person information meetings.

Rapid Response funds will be used to carry out the statewide Rapid Response activities in conjunction with TAA funds.

(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker 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.*

The most common Work-Based Training model in South Dakota is the On-the-Job Training (OJT). This training model is an efficient and effective way for a participant in Title I programs to gain the knowledge and skills essential to performing the job and maintaining long-term employment. DLR job service office staff work with our business services team, who have a strong presence in their communities, to create relationships and opportunities for OJT. This can incentivize an employer to hire individuals who may be harder to serve, who lost their jobs at no fault of their own, who lack experience, and/or who are looking for a long-term commitment to a specific occupation. While not yet offered in South Dakota, DLR is prepared to offer Customized Training, which provides 45% of the training costs through the Title I program funding.

Due to funding limitations with the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, work-based learning opportunities are an ideal option to empower businesses to invest in their employees, provide job-specific training, and increase

retention. Prior to this state plan, DLR used statewide funding to develop an incumbent-worker training model. While the state is prepared to implement an incumbent worker training program, increased costs to do business and stagnant funding have prevented implementation. Work-based learning programs foster innovation in job placement strategies.

DLR's partnership with the Department of Corrections has flourished in recent years. While individuals complete their Occupational Skills Training during their incarceration, they often lack the work experience that many employers are seeking. DLR uses OJT to incentivize employers to hire these graduates despite their lack of relevant work history.

- (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).*

Registered Apprenticeship grants are under the Workforce Development Division at DLR, as are the Wagner-Peyser and Title I programs. The apprenticeship program consists of seven coordinators who develop apprenticeship programs and assist apprentices or mentors with financial resources available through these grants. Through the initial intake, Registered Apprenticeships are discussed with participants as a potential training option. If an Adult or Dislocated Worker participant has an interest in a Registered Apprenticeship program, their Employment Specialists will connect with the Registered Apprenticeship Coordinators to identify businesses in the industry of interest who are hiring for their apprenticeship programs. In addition to any funding available through the Registered Apprenticeship grants, these customers also have access to Title I funding to assist with their training and employment goals.

- (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).*

WIOA training provider requirements increase accountability and transparency through reporting, biennial review, and performance outcomes. WIOA requires DLR, on behalf of the Governor of South Dakota and in consultation with the South Dakota Workforce Development Council (WDC), to establish criteria and procedures regarding training provider eligibility to receive WIOA Title I funds. These funds are for the provision of training services directed towards high-demand occupations and training programs, allowing WIOA Title I participants to earn a credential within two years after beginning their studies.

The purpose of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is to provide guidance and establish criteria for organizations wishing to receive funding under WIOA Title I to provide training services. Tuition assistance for WIOA Title I participants is determined on an individual need and availability of funding.

Role and Responsibilities

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) is responsible for:

- Identifying eligibility criteria, including high-demand occupations for WDC consideration.
- Developing, maintaining, and disseminating the ETPL as the official list of training providers and training programs in South Dakota.
- Removing programs that do not meet established program requirements and performance levels or fail to report required data.
- Ensuring training providers have the expertise to assist individuals with disabilities and those in need of adult education and literacy activities.
- Communication with the United States Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) state director to develop a mechanism to contact all Registered Apprenticeship sponsors in the State to allow them to indicate interest.

Approved training providers are responsible for:

- Submitting accurate and timely performance data and cost information for both initial eligibility and continued eligibility.
- Coordinating financial aid, grants, and scholarships with WIOA Title I resources and ensuring WIOA Title I funds do not duplicate funds otherwise available to the participant.
- Ensuring WIOA Title I funds are used for required tuition, fees, books, and required school supplies.
- Ensuring the distribution of participant funds is communicated with DLR staff.
- Coordinating with DLR staff to create tutoring options for WIOA Title I participants who could benefit from services.
- Proactively collaborate and communicate with DLR staff to secure all documentation required for WIOA Title I participants to receive financial assistance. Documentation will include, but will not be limited to, progress reporting forms, attendance records, information release forms, midterm, quarter, and semester grades, and invoices.
- Understanding and agreeing to the Conditions and Assurances outlined in Form 10B of the DLR WIOA Manual.
- Retaining documentation verifying the accuracy of its submitted program performance reports and providing access to the documentation for four years after the program year.
- Acknowledging that if the program is approved, the information contained in the application, including performance requirement information, will be available for the public to view on the DLR website and trainingproviderresults.gov.

Provider Eligibility

Types of Entities Eligible to Apply - §680.410(d)

Providers of training services are required to be on the South Dakota ETPL to receive WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding for training services. Training services are provided through Individual Training Agreements (ITA). Eligible training providers allowed to receive funding through an ITA:

- Institutions of higher education with programs leading to a recognized post-secondary credential.
- Entities that carry out programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act (29 U.S.C. 50).
- Eligible providers of Adult Education and Literacy activities under WIOA Title II if such activities are provided in combination with training services.
- Public and private providers of a program of training services, which may include community-based organizations and joint labor-management organizations
- A local workforce development board, if it meets the conditions of WIOA sec. 107(g)(1).

Registered Apprenticeship Program Providers - §680.450(b) §680.460(c) §680.470(a-e)

Under WIOA Title I, Registered Apprenticeship Programs are automatically eligible for placement on the state-approved ETPL. Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) sponsors seeking ETP inclusion must either be based in South Dakota or have an established partnership with a South Dakota business, and must provide the following information in the application:

- Occupations included within the RAP;
- Name and address of the RAP sponsor;
- Names and addresses of the Related Technical Instruction provider(s) and the location(s) of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address;
- Method and length of instruction;
- Number of active apprentices.

RAPs are not subject to the same application and performance information requirements, initial eligibility period, or initial eligibility procedures as other providers, due to the detailed application and vetting procedures required by the

U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship (OA). RAP status verification is conducted every two years, at a minimum, with U.S. DOL OA. RAPs in good standing with OA will remain on the ETPL until the:

- A finding of the U.S. DOL has deregistered the program.
- Program sponsor has notified the State that it no longer wants the program to be included on the list.
- Program sponsor has intentionally provided inaccurate information.
- Program has violated any provision of Title I of WIOA or the WIOA regulation, including 29 CFR §38, for no less than two years.

Note: Pre-apprenticeship programs do not receive the same WIOA exceptions allowed for RAPs. Pre-apprenticeship programs seeking initial or continued eligibility to the ETPL must follow the same process requirements as other non-RAP training providers, as described in this policy. - §680.470(f)

Reciprocity - §680.520(a-b)

DLR may enter into a reciprocal or other agreement with another state. Training in another state will only be considered for an eligible participant if:

- Similar training is not available in South Dakota; and
- There is employment for the participant in South Dakota upon completion of training, as verified by the employer; and
- The training provider is active and in good standing on the ETPL in the state of the provider's physical address; and
- The training provider has completed the Initial Application Process; and
- All other conditions for training eligibility, as identified in the DLR WIOA Manual, are met and justified.

A DLR Program Specialist **must approve all ITAs** with out-of-state training providers **prior to a commitment of funding**. Current agreements can be viewed on the Eligible Training Providers and Programs page. For more information on establishing an agreement with DLR, email DLRETP@state.sd.us.

Exempt Training Providers - §680.530(a)

Providers of On-the-Job training (OJT), customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, paid or unpaid Work Experience, or transitional jobs are not subject to the requirements applicable to entities listed on the ETPL and are not included on the state list of eligible providers and programs.

Equal Opportunity

Eligible training providers are subject to the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements contained in WIOA sec. 188 and implement the regulations of 29 CFR §38.

Program Eligibility

Types of Programs Eligible - §680.420(a-d)

A program must provide one or more courses or classes leading to one or more of the following:

- Industry-recognized certificate or certification
- Certificate of completion of a registered apprenticeship
- License recognized by the Federal government, State of South Dakota, and another state with which South Dakota has a reciprocal agreement
- Community or technical college certificate of completion
- Associate degree
- Baccalaureate degree
- Secondary school diploma or its equivalent

- Employment
- Measurable skill gains toward a credential described above or employment

Programs Not Eligible

Programs associated solely with job readiness, basic skills, career exploration, and reading literacy programs will not be eligible for inclusion on the ETPL.

Initial Application Process

§680.450(a-b)(e)(g-h)

Initial Program Application Requirements

To be considered for inclusion on the ETPL, a training provider must create a Training Provider account in SDWORKS. Once DLR has activated the account, providers must submit an application for each training program, including an application for each delivery style (online, in-person, hybrid). The training provider must submit a complete program application in SDWORKS, including information regarding:

- Institution Type
- Contact Information
- Federal Employer Number/FEIN
- Website
- Program description
- Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code
- Information on training services that lead to a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma or its equivalent
- College's or company's accreditations (national or State) *if applicable*
- Verifiable information about performance for the most recent twelve (12) month period that includes one of the following¹:
 - Completion Rate
 - Entered Employment Rate
 - Median Earnings
 - Credential Attainment Rate
- Training programs offered in partnership with businesses must provide one of the following, *if applicable*:
 - a letter of support from a local employer or employers;
 - evidence of the existence of an employer-based advisory committee;
 - letter of support by an industry association or organization; or
 - letter of support from a local economic development organization.
- Information addressing the alignment of training with in-demand industry sectors or occupations
- Program prerequisites
- Necessary program equipment
- Class time, length, form, and mode of delivery
- Program duration
- Location(s) where the program is offered
- Program costs
- Agree to accept the terms and conditions of DLR Conditions and Assurances
- Provider Payment Authorization form

Initial Program Review Process

Prospective training providers may apply year-round at any time; eligibility will be open and rolling. All applications must be submitted through SDWORKS and use the SDWORKS Guide for Training Providers. Providers must submit separate applications for each individual program. If multiple training delivery formats (in-person only, online-only, hybrid) are available, an application must be submitted for each delivery format.

A DLR Program Specialist will review initial program applications to verify Initial Program Application Requirements are completed. The training provider contact will be informed via email of approval or denial status, or if additional information is needed, within 45 days of submission.

Once approved, training providers and/or programs will be listed on the ETPL. The initial eligibility period expires the following July 31. The provider must then apply for continued eligibility on a biennial basis by July 31 at the end of the eligibility period, except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Tuition Refund

If a DLR participant receives tuition assistance and is eligible for a refund from the training provider, the training provider must reimburse DLR for its fair share of the refund. DLR will apply this reimbursement to the grant that paid for the tuition. Under no circumstances will funds be returned to a participant without the Department's written permission.

Continued Eligibility Programs

§680.460(a)(f)(g)(i)

Continued Program Application Requirements

After the initial or conditional eligibility period, providers must submit an application to meet continued eligibility requirements, as authorized by WIOA sec. 122. The training provider must review and update the continued eligibility program in SDWORKS in accordance with the SDWORKS Guide for Training Providers and include information on:

- A training provider's prior eligibility status or the status of an existing program
- Accurate program cost information (including tuition & fees)
- Accurate consumer information in SDWORKS
- The availability of training services through the State
- Performance reports for the previous program year submitted within the required reporting period
- Meet minimum performance standards
- Performance accountability measures
- Ability to offer industry-recognized certificates and/or credentials
- Ability of the providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities
- The degree to which the program relates to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the State
- The ability of the training provider to provide training services to individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, incumbent workers, and individuals with barriers to employment
- Any additional information requested by DLR

Continued Eligibility Review Process

Providers must submit continued eligibility applications by July 31 of the biennial period. The DLR Program Specialist will review the continued application to verify the Continued Eligibility Application Requirements are completed. The training

provider contact will be informed via email of approval or denial status, or if additional information is needed, within 45 days of submission.

Reporting and Performance Requirements

Program Performance

All providers must meet reporting and performance requirements for continued eligibility. Data collected in the ETP performance will be made accessible to the public via the WIOA Annual Report and shared by U.S. DOL at trainingproviderresults.gov. This information will also be distributed to job seekers throughout the WIOA system.

Training Provider Reporting Period

Each approved training provider must submit program performance reports on an annual basis, based on the Program Year (July 1 to June 30), to DLR for each approved program using the data template supplied by DLR. Data must be **submitted no later than July 31** after the end of each program year for the 12-month period beginning July 1 of the previous year. This 12-month period is the "reporting period."

Example: On July 31, 2020, the training provider submits a program performance report for each of its approved programs for the reporting period beginning July 1, 2019, ending June 30, 2020.

Required Reporting Elements

1. ***Total Number of Individuals Served*** – The **total number** of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) in the program of study in the reporting period.
2. ***Total Number of Individuals Exited*** – The total number of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) who **completed, withdrew, or transferred** from this program of study in the reporting period.
3. ***Total Number of Individuals Completed*** – The total number of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) who **completed (did not withdraw or transfer out)** from this program of study in the reporting period.
4. ***Credential Attainment Rate*** – The total number of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) who completed the training program **AND** attained a credential associated with the program of study within one year after exit. This includes all students who attained a recognized post-secondary credential during the program or within one year after exit, **OR** attained a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and who were also employed or enrolled in an education or training program leading to a post-secondary credential within one year after training program exit.
5. ***Social Security Number*** - Include the social security numbers of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) for the purpose of direct UI wage record match or supplemental wage information conducted by DLR.
 - ***Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit*** – The total number of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) from the training program who are found to be employed.
 - ***Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit*** – Total quarterly earnings, for the total number of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) who are employed in the second quarter after exit.
 - ***Average Earnings 2nd and 4th Quarters After Exit*** – Average earnings of students (WIOA and non-WIOA) in the training program who are in unsubsidized employment during the second and fourth quarters after exit.

Minimum Performance Requirements

Program performance is collected for DLR to evaluate program effectiveness and monitor compliance. DLR has established minimum performance standards to meet the State's lowest negotiated performance rate for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth program established with U.S. DOL for the biennial program year. Registered Apprenticeship Programs are not required to submit performance information. Program performance is based on **all student** outcomes for the **Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit, Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit, Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit, and Credential Attainment Rate**.

Programs that ***fail three out of four elements for two consecutive years*** must be removed from the ETPL as stated in the Conditions for Removal. Training programs with less than ten total students are exempt from the conditions of removal due to insufficient performance requirements. Providers removed for one of these reasons may reapply for initial eligibility by demonstrating compliance with all WIOA requirements.

Personal Identifiable Information & Confidentiality

To comply with federal reporting requirements, the collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) (e.g., Social Security Numbers on WIOA and non-WIOA program participants) is required to derive performance outcomes, such as employment and earnings. PII and other sensitive information must be protected. DLR and training providers must take the steps necessary to ensure all PII obtained from participants and/or other individuals in the ITA invoicing process is protected from unauthorized disclosure. All PII data must be processed in a manner that will protect the confidentiality of the records/documents and is designed to prevent unauthorized persons from retrieving such records by computer, remote terminal, or any other means.

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) generally applies to post-secondary institutions that are eligible training providers. Most post-secondary institutions are also recipients of federal funds under a program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. However, some private providers of training services may not be recipients of funds administered by the U.S. Department of Education, including Pell Grants or student loans funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Those providers would generally be excluded from FERPA requirements. Compliance with ETPL reporting requirements does not violate the privacy requirement set forth in FERPA. Per TEGL 7-16, joint guidance issued by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, the FERPA audit or evaluation exception permits PII disclosure from education records for WIOA performance accountability purposes.

Conditions for Removal

§680.450(A-B)(E)(G-H)

If a training program fails to meet the minimum performance requirement for two consecutive years, it will be removed from the ETPL. Training programs with less than ten total students are exempt from the conditions of removal due to insufficient performance requirements. Providers removed for one of these reasons may reapply for initial eligibility by demonstrating compliance with all requirements under WIOA law.

An approved program will be removed from the ETPL if a training provider does not supply annual reporting and performance requirements by the date indicated in the *Training Provider Reporting Period* section. If a training provider supplies false performance information, misrepresents costs or services, or substantially violates the requirements of WIOA law or regulations, the provider will be removed from the ETPL for a period of at least two years. Providers may be required to repay all WIOA Title I funds received during the period of non-compliance.

If a training provider or program of training services is removed from the ETPL while WIOA participants are enrolled, the participant may complete the program unless the provider or program has lost authorization to operate in South Dakota.

Appeal Process

§683.630(B)

If a training provider is denied from inclusion on the ETPL or terminated from eligibility, the provider has the option to appeal. A written request for appeal and a statement of justification, explaining why the provider should be included on

the ETPL, must be submitted via e-mail to DLRETP@state.sd.us within 15 business days after notification of ineligibility or termination. Written appeals should not exceed one page.

The training provider will be contacted within 15 business days of DLR's receipt of the appeal to schedule a hearing with the ETPL appeals board. The board will consist of a DLR Labor Program Specialist, the Workforce Training Director, and a WDC member. The Board will issue a final decision within 60 business days of the hearing date. If denied, a program will be unable to reapply through the ETPL eligibility process for two years from the date of final notification by the ETPL Appeals Board.

- (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).**

The WIOA Title I Adult program provides priority of individualized career and training services to individuals in the following order:

Priority of Service
1. Low Income, Public Assistance, or Basic Skills Deficient <u>AND</u> Veteran and Eligible Spouse including Widows and Widowers
2. Low Income, Public Assistance, or Basic Skills Deficient
3. Displaced Homemaker; Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians; Older individuals; <i>Individuals with disabilities; Ex-Offenders</i> ; Homeless individuals or homeless children and youths; youth who have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, have low levels of literacy, and facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers; individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime TANF eligibility; single parents; or long-term unemployed individuals <u>AND</u> Veteran and Eligible Spouse* including Widows and Widowers
4. Displaced Homemaker; Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians; Older individuals; <i>Individuals with disabilities; Ex-Offenders</i> ; Homeless individuals or homeless children and youths; youth who have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, have low levels of literacy, and facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers; individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime TANF eligibility; single parents; or long-term unemployed individuals
5. Veterans and Eligible Spouses who are NOT included in the priority group (1 or 3 above)
6. Priority established by the Governor or Workforce Development Council: <i>High School Dropout</i>
7. All other individuals ages 18 and older.

In addition, Title I Adult funding is reserved for those who are low-income, on public assistance, basic skills deficient, ex-offenders, and high school dropouts, with priority given to those who are low-income and basic skills deficient on public assistance. The priority of service will be monitored through the annual program monitoring process ([See Policy 6.7 Oversight and Monitoring](#)) by comparing the number of applicants eligible for a priority population to the number of priority enrollees in the Adult program. Priority of Service is identified through South Dakota's management information system. Monitoring will focus on enrolled individuals who are veterans and meet priority of service, and on nonveterans who meet priority of service.

- (5) **Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.**

As designated by the Governor, the Department of Labor and Regulation Cabinet Secretary may provide written approval to transfer up to 100 percent of a program year allocation between the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Through the State Accounting system, expenditures for each grant, including the WIOA Title I Adult and WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker funding, are tracked separately. Expenditures from each of these programs are identified quarterly on the respective grant's federal financial report.

- (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).

Although TAA participation has dwindled as a result of not being reauthorized, individual who have been identified as eligible for TAA, South Dakota requires all TAA participants to be enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and Dislocated Worker programs. Co-enrollment of workers certified as eligible for TAA into WIOA allows for the timely, individualized career services and improves the effectiveness of the TAA Program. Barriers to service delivery to this population should be eliminated to maximize the resources available in the One-Stop System (refer to the Active Resource Coordination Integrated Resource Teams Policy 5.1). Enrollment in other workforce programs allows for services to begin before becoming eligible for TAA, allowing individuals more time to consider their training and employment options.

- (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)

South Dakota places a strong emphasis on enrollment to the greatest extent possible, including core programs and TAA. The philosophy provides our customers with the largest pool of opportunities, including basic, individualized training, and support services in each of the state's American Job Service Offices. During the intake and orientation to the One-Stop System, programs and services are presented to the customer. All eligible individuals will receive formal and informal assessments of their skills and needs. Based on assessment results, the customer and their Employment Specialists implement an employment plan outlining their goals, steps, and services to achieve them. The WIOA and TAA Employment Specialist roles are single-staff positions, minimizing redundant efforts.

- (8) **Describe the State's process for familiarizing one-stop staff with the TAA program.** 20 CFR 618.804(j), 20 CFR 618.305

For several years, TAA has not been a part of the onboarding process. South Dakota has a TAA Coordinator who oversees the program. There is one Lead Employment Specialist who is well-versed in TAA with years of training who attends to the needs of any TAA participants. As part of the state's onboarding process, staff are introduced to all the partner programs and services.

(c) Youth Program Requirements. *With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies to support the implementation of these activities. States 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.³ 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.

South Dakota is a single-area state and utilizes DLR as the provider of their youth workforce investment services. External entities are not awarded to deliver the youth program. Individual service contracts are established based on the customer's goals, assessment results, and employment plans. Employment specialists with an emphasis in youth services are available to serve clients virtually and in person, ensuring participants are served in their preferred manner. When services such as training, transportation or healthcare are needed, the employment specialist will connect with a local provider. Employment specialists identify a suitable provider based on the participant's location and needs. The provider's ongoing utilization is contingent upon the participant's overall experience and progress and the business's ability to operate under DLR's fiscal procedures and requirements.

³ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

To continually work towards the expected performance, DLR reviews reports, actively monitors data, and performs a comprehensive analysis of both active and inactive SDWORKS files. Case management and service delivery training are provided to employment specialists. Training is focused on the information gathered from data and file analysis. Employment specialists have access to their management team and to a Youth Labor Program Specialist to assist with day-to-day service delivery needs. DLR also has staff dedicated to data analysis and federal reporting, which helps to identify trends, make predictions, and adjust service delivery to improve outcomes.

- (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.

DLR will focus on the goals of both in-school and out-of-school youth. The DLR team working on the youth program is providing intensive case management to the young adults enrolled in the program. Through strong, consistent case management, youth will be empowered to reach their overall long-term goals and will gain an advocate to help them through barriers to reach their goals.

DLR's youth program had seen high growth in the number of enrolled in-school youth in previous program years. This growth had an impact on the program's required spending ratio between in- and out-of-school youth. Without a change in focus, the impact would have continued to grow until DLR would not have been able to meet this requirement. Recently, DLR has focused on building out-of-school partnerships and strengthening our connection with the out-of-school population in South Dakota. This has proven more difficult, as there isn't a high concentration of eligible out-of-school youth whose goal is to enter the workforce, as DLR found with high schools and in-school youth. This has been a slow process, and DLR will continue to focus on connecting with out-of-school youth and growing that portion of our program. DLR will be strategic in cultivating in-school partnerships by starting to work with small, targeted populations to ensure we maintain the required balance in spending between the two populations.

While we work to grow our out-of-school youth population, we remain committed to supporting our in-school youth who are already enrolled by continuing to offer all WIOA services to help them reach their career goals. DLR offers a virtual soft skills class called Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere, which has been promoted to schools as a resource to help any student develop the soft skills needed to enter the workforce. In the past, DLR spent a lot of time with students creating resumes and completing mock interviews. DLR has invested in Big Interview, which allows students to use artificial intelligence to build a professional resume and grow strong interview skills. Both Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere and Big Interview allow any in-school youth across the state to develop professionally.

With South Dakota being a large, heavily rural state, virtual services are available to individuals who do not live near a physical DLR office. Strong partnerships already exist with Job Corps and Adult Education and Literacy providers. These partnerships include meeting the customer where they are by offering appointments with employment specialists at these locations. Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a partnership in which DLR works with the Department of Education's JAG specialists to ensure participants have a strong entry into the workforce. We are working to connect with school districts that offer alternative education options to help students plan for life after high school. Consistency in support, services, and communication will be key with this population in helping them achieve their goals.

- (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.*

Staff have been trained on a progression of services. When first meeting with new enrollees, we focus on completing an initial assessment to understand what an individual has, what their goals are, and where they are with those goals. Employment specialists then move into the career exploration phase, whether or not the individual has a defined goal, to ensure they have a career goal that will financially support them and that they know the steps necessary to complete that goal. This phase includes job shadows or informational interviews to help make connections to the industry to gain the most accurate information possible. We follow this with a pre-employment phase in which employment specialists ensure that participants have a professional portfolio that includes a resume, a cover letter, and interview skills. This leads to work experiences, on-the-job training, occupational skills training, apprenticeships, or employment.

Each of our referral partners will lead to a slight variation on the progression of services. For example, the youth referred through our partnership with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers will spend more time on career exploration and pre-employment phases as they work toward earning their GED, ideally ending their time with us in a work experience or on-the-job training that leads to full-time employment. Our partnership with Job Corps means referrals don't spend a lot of time in the career exploration phase because they already have a strong connection to their trade through their training at Job Corps. They end up in a work experience much faster than our AEL referrals.

Along with the progression of services, the youth program plans to add options for structured sessions focusing on the 14 program elements. Currently, we offer a wide range of virtual workshops focused on financial literacy, including banking basics, budgeting, and credit education. Other areas of focus could be leadership development and post-secondary preparation.

Fortunately for DLR, the structure of our organization puts our employment specialists in close contact with our apprentice coordinators, who work with businesses to build apprenticeships and case-manage current apprentices.

Apprenticeships are frequently discussed with youth participants as options for entry into a career. Employment specialists specialize in exploring career opportunities, building soft skills, and creating professional packages for participants. All these components assist individuals in obtaining employment, including being hired into an apprenticeship. At that point, DLR employment specialists and apprentice coordinators work together to support new apprenticeships through the completion of their program.

- (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.**

WIOA Regulation §681.300 provides State Boards with the authority to define and establish documentation requirements for additional assistance. Additional assistance is defined as an individual who meets one or more of the following:

- No employment within the last six months
- Unable to hold employment due to being fired from, or quitting, two or more jobs in the last six months
- History of substance abuse
- One or more parents are currently incarcerated
- Is a veteran

Documentation requirements include a case note in the participant's SDWORKS file outlining the Additional Assistance category that applies to the participant and the participant's situation related to the Additional Assistance (reference

the Youth section of WIOA Eligibility Policy 4.1). Participants sign the completed WIOA application, adding a layer of self-attestation for validation.

(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).)

In compliance with the Single-area State requirements, South Dakota made the Combined State Plan available on the DLR website on 12/12/2025. The public comment period closed on 1/16/2026. An additional public comment period was held during the Workforce Development Council meetings on 12/9/2025 and TBD. All WIOA partner agencies and WDC members were made aware of this public comment period. In addition, the plan's availability for public comment was shared on social media. Comments could be submitted via an online form or by mail.

- (2) The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)

DLR is responsible for disbursement of Title I, II, and III grant funds and offers a wide variety of services to participants statewide. The Department of Human Services (DHS) in South Dakota is responsible for disbursement of Title IV grant funds.

- (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).)

At intake, activities with all Title I applicants begin with the completion of an eligibility determination activity. Next, the Objective Assessment provides staff with an overall view of the individual and helps determine strengths and weaknesses, as well as physical, emotional, financial, and educational needs. The completion of the Objective Assessment naturally flows into the creation of the Employment Plan and helps drive goal development. When feasible, all agencies providing services to a single customer are encouraged to develop a joint Employment Plan. The Employment Plan helps staff and participants to identify primary career goals. Once a goal is established, this allows staff and participants to identify next steps and set expectations for both parties. Staff are encouraged to update the Employment Plan frequently to help participants track their progress and adjust goals and objectives as needed. Services are available to eligible youth, including those with disabilities. Beneficial services to assist youth with disabilities include accommodation, assistive technology, partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation, and connecting to counseling or behavioral services as appropriate. Our goal is to meet youth where they are and use the Employment Plan to move them along their educational and career pathway. If the customer is interested, DLR will connect the participant to additional services through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and work in collaboration with VR to serve the customer. Accommodation, including assistive technology, is offered as needed to ensure a successful experience for the participant. Additional services include:

Post-secondary Preparation and Transition Service – Includes assistance in completing financial aid forms, assistance in applying to post-secondary institutions, coordinating remedial course work necessary to attend post-secondary training, coordinating meaningful meetings between the client and post-secondary representatives, and learning about necessary life skills to be successful in post-secondary environments.

Educational Achievement – Recorded when a participant takes part in active tutoring or study skills training in either the secondary or post-secondary environment.

Leadership Development Services – Designed to encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors. This activity is entered when a participant is enrolled through Job

Search Workshop, mock interviews, community service projects, driver's education, voter's registration, soft skills training, completing assessments to ensure readiness, and more.

Adult Mentoring – Coordinated formal relationships between adult mentors and Title I Youth participants in which a participant's competence and character is enriched through the guidance, encouragement, and support of the mentor.

Alternative Secondary School – Offered to participants who have dropped out of school and have made the decision to enroll in GED® earning alternative education programs.

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling – Used when referrals are made to quality providers for employment-related issues, such as drug and alcohol counseling, mental health needs, behavior management, etc. This service is also used when a participant provides an update regarding counseling sessions. This service will be used regardless of whether DLR or the participant is funding sessions.

Education concurrent with Workforce Preparation – Integrated education and training offered concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities, basic academic skills, and hands-on occupational skills training taught within the same time frame and connected to training in a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway. This is when a participant is active in an education service, while also participating in a Work Experience or On-The-Job Training. Similar to a Registered Apprenticeship or Pre-apprenticeship. Both services are entered, and staff can also enter the education service and the workforce preparation service.

Provision of Labor Market Information – Provides specific labor market information about industry sectors and occupations available based on a participant's interest to increase career awareness and enhance career exploration.

Youth Incentives – Financial incentives to complete short-term educational or employment-related goals in accordance with the individualized employment plan. Youth incentives are not a stand-alone activity or service; they are simply a method for payment. The service the participant did to earn the incentive is the service. The current incentive offerings include measurable skills gains, completion of traditional secondary, alternative, and post-secondary education, career exploration, pre-employment, soft skills, and job retention. The career exploration, pre-employment, and soft skills incentives include completing a specific cluster of activities to provide youth with a complete experience with the incentive and should lead to more informed career decisions.

Financial Literacy – Typically offered through a partnership with a local provider or financial institution. There are a variety of courses offered every other month covering topics such as banking basics, budgeting, credit basics, beginner insurance information, grocery budgeting, and renting basics. Student loan classes are offered twice a year to either prepare potential students for what they will use or help individuals leaving school, or those who have been out for some time, gain the necessary knowledge to be successful with student loans. All courses are offered virtually to the public.

Occupational Skills Training – An organized program of study on the ETPL that provides specific vocational skills that lead to an occupational skills certificate or credential.

On-The-Job Training (OJT) – Meaningful training to a participant on a path to regular full-time employment with an employer. Used to penetrate industries that are risk-averse to hiring employees new to the vocation by allowing a subsidy for an agreed-upon training period.

Entrepreneurial Skills Development – Provides the basic skills of starting and operating a small business. This is not a formal occupational skills training, meaning this includes exposure to entrepreneurship and can be offered through connections to small business owners and organizations.

Enrolled in Secondary Education – A service entered when a participant is enrolled in a secondary education program at the 9th grade level or above.

Non-Occupational Skills Training – Training that assists a participant in acquiring technical or occupational skills towards his/her career pathway and leads to an occupational skills certificate or credential and is not on the ETPL.

Work Experience – Generally a partnership with local employers, a paid or unpaid training experience, that gives youth participants hands-on experience in a field they are interested in pursuing or provides them with other valuable employability-enhancing skills through actual work experience.

Pre-apprenticeship programs – Coordination between educational institutions, primarily secondary schools, and local business and industry. This service provides monitored work experience and education that help earn educational and work hours toward the completion of a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Job Shadowing – Allows youth participants to earn a stipend while spending time on a work site with professionals in an industry of interest to the participant, a function of a Work Experience.

Support Services – Services to active Title I participants and Title I Youth participants in Follow Up status to aid in starting or maintaining participation in workforce training or employment retention. Services offered include assistance with dependent care, transportation, medical and counseling needs, housing, work attire, necessary workplace or training/job seeking accommodations, books/supplies required for education and training, fees associated with applications, tests, educational testing, and certifications, with an “other” service reserved for participant needs that do not fall under the categories listed.

(4) **A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.**

Education and training activities provided by the partners are summarized in the One-Stop Services Form 3 provided to all Wagner-Peyser participants during their orientation and intake to the One-Stop System. In addition, Financial Services Form 4 is provided to customers enrolled in WIOA Title I programs.

South Dakota Agency	Program Role	Resources
DLR	WIOA Title I Adult	Individualized, Training, Support, and Follow-Up Services, Employer Services
	WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker	Individualized, Training, Support, and Follow-Up Services, Employer Services
	WIOA Title I Youth	Youth Service Elements and Employer Services
	WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services	Basic Career Services, Coordinated Referrals to partner programs, and Employer Services
	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Job Search Allowance, Relocation Assistance, Transportation and Subsistence Assistance while in Training, Training Services, Readjustment Allowance, and Reemployment Assistance

	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)	Intensive career readiness services for Veterans and Employer Services
	Reemployment Assistance Benefits (RA)	Provides financial benefit to individuals who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own
	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)	Eligibility Review for Reemployment Assistance Benefits and Coordination with other workforce programs
	Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program (MSFW)	Basic and Individualized services that meet the unique needs of farmworkers
Black Hills Special Services Cooperative	National Farmworker Jobs Programs (NFJP)	Provides education, training and employment, and support services
U.S. Forest System	Job Corps	Offers secondary education, post-secondary workforce training programs, and transition services to improve employment outcomes and self-sufficiency
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux Tribe, & Yankton Sioux Tribe	Native American Programs	Employment and training activities to make individuals more competitive, and promote social and economic development
DLR	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)	Basic skill assessments, literacy and numeracy, high school equivalency preparation, family literacy, integrated education and training, English Language Acquisition, Integrated English Literacy, and Civics
Department of Human Services (DHS)	WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Career planning, vocational counseling, situational assessments, work-based and training services, assistive technology, transition services, benefits specialists, disability specific, and employment services
DOE	Career and Technical Education Program (CTE)	Educational and training programs that provide opportunities to help students prepare for work
	General Educational Development (GED®) Test	Serves as the Administrator for the GED® exam in the state
DSS	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	Provides temporary financial assistance and employment and training services to improve economic self-sufficiency
	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	Financial assistance for food to help individuals meet basic dietary needs while they regain financial independence
DLR National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)	Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	Part-time work experiences and training opportunities to enhance self-sufficiency

(5) **The competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for Title I activities.**

DLR One-Stop Career Centers provide the majority of Title I services. Other services, such as driver's education, counseling, or training, are delivered by local providers using established partnerships and payment through the DLR

fiscal processes. When a competitive process is needed, the state procurement law is used. This regulation can be found at sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=5-18A.

- (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.*

DLR Employment Specialists assist participants in determining the training necessary to meet their needs and employment goals. Based on guidance from DLR staff and eligibility, the participant can select a program of study from those identified on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). After enrollment, assessments, and the Employment Plan are complete, a determination is made regarding the participant's eligibility for training services:

- The participant is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services (Title I Adults and Dislocated Workers).
- The participant is in need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment (Title I Adults and Dislocated Workers); and
 - The participant has the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services.
 - The training will assist the individual in obtaining employment upon completion of the training.
 - The individual is eligible for funding through the WIOA Title I program.
- The participant has an unmet need based on their Financial Aid Award Letter.
- The participant has been accepted to the program of study.
- The program of study is on the ETPL. If eligible for training assistance, an Individual Training Account is created specifically for the participant, the program of study, and the training provider.

DLR issues payment to the provider once the proper documentation and payment are entered into the SDWORKS system, approved by the manager, and then reviewed for final approval by the Administrative Services division.

- (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 sections 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232.*

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) serves as South Dakota's single-area statewide Workforce Investment Board. It promotes coordination between all workforce programs, including those funded under Title I programs and Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs. The WDC frequently hears testimony from both programs and supports policy efforts related to WIOA Co-Enrollment and collaborative service-delivery models.

With the Council's support, Adult Education issues are addressed, multiyear grant applications are reviewed, and program initiatives are integrated or aligned with other statewide efforts. In past WIOA Title II grant competitions, the Council has not only reviewed applicants' abstracts and program goals but also afforded members the opportunity to score and notate each eligible application against a set of predetermined, published [state and federal] criteria. In addition to the required review to determine whether applications are consistent with South Dakota's *WIOA State Plan*, the Council has the opportunity to make recommendations to DLR to promote the alignment of [local] Adult Education services with the state's *WIOA State Plan*.

Within the Council's statutory obligations, Job Service offices assist with job searches, employment guidance and counseling, and referrals to appropriate services [which benefit individuals under all WIOA Titles]. The Job Service offices not only serve individuals seeking jobs and training but also support businesses and industries.

- (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.

Reference Memorandum of Understanding: Appendix 2.

Reference Joint Powers Agreement Between DHS and DLR: Appendix 3.

(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;

Waiver 1: WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 – Out-Of-School Youth Expenditure

The State of South Dakota is requesting a waiver from Section 129 (a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410, which requires not less than 75% of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for Out-of-School Youth. South Dakota is requesting a waiver to reduce the 75% funding requirement for out-of-school youth to 50%.

South Dakota is a small state, and the same employment specialists who work the out-of-school youth program also operate the in-school youth program. While still focusing efforts on out-of-school youth, reducing the expected expenditure rate to 50% will provide equal financial opportunities for both populations and minimize confusion for staff. South Dakota's Employment Specialists can concentrate on serving youth participants and less on funding categories. South Dakota DLR has received this waiver for the past six years. Through this waiver, DLR has realized that maintaining youth engagement over a four-year period is a challenge for optimal program performance in credentialing. With this knowledge, our strategy moving forward involves connecting with in-school youth during their junior or senior year when our program can have a deeper impact prior to their exit from high school and entering the workforce. DLR has also found that in-school connections and programs tend to grow and spend at a higher rate than out-of-school programs. Moving forward, DLR will be strategic in its engagement with in-school youth. The first targeted area for partnership will be with the Department of Social Services' Independent Living Program, offering workforce entry strategies to youth prior to them completing high school and leaving the foster care system. If this partnership goes well and spending is balanced between the two programs, DLR will look to expand into other populations.

Historically, South Dakota DLR faced challenges in meeting the 20% expenditure rate for work experience funding in the youth program. Work experiences have proven to be an easier fit for in-school youth because the service is short-term employment that is set to end. Most out-of-school youth cannot afford to participate in a work experience service, unless it is an on-the-job training, because they need a consistent income to support themselves. In-school youth will likely continue to be supported by their current support system while they attend school and participate in work experiences. DLR will continue to work toward a work experience service with any youth, but being able to lower the expenditure rate for out-of-school youth will allow DLR to offer more work experiences and meet the 20% expenditure requirement.

Waiver 2: WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) - Allow Local Workforce Development Areas to Count Both WIOA Local Youth Formula Funds and TANF Funds Toward the Minimum 20 Percent Expenditure Requirement for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience

The State of South Dakota is requesting a waiver from WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) that allows local workforce development areas to count both WIOA local youth formula funds and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds toward the minimum 20 percent expenditure requirement for paid or unpaid work experience.

Along with targeting our in-school youth foster care referrals with work experiences, South Dakota DLR will also work to offer work experience services to TANF participants who have historically had lower participation in work experience services. South Dakota's low unemployment rate means most individuals can find employment regardless of their background. A shared goal of DLR's youth and TANF programs is to help our participants find better jobs or long-term careers instead of them just finding employment.

By combining the career exploration services that the youth program can provide with either a work experience or on-the-job training, TANF participants can achieve stabilization while working to find their ideal employment. Providing work experiences and on-the-job training will allow for further career exploration to take place to find the long-term solution the programs are working toward.

Allowing TANF on-the-job training funds to count toward the required 20% work experience expenditure will assist South Dakota in meeting that goal, and DLR's youth and TANF programs work toward their shared goal.

Waiver 3: 20 CFR 681.550 – Individual Training Account Usage for In-School Youth

The State of South Dakota is requesting a waiver from 20 CFR 681.550 that allows WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Title I Out-of-School Youth between the ages of 14 and 21.

South Dakota is requesting a waiver to allow the state to provide Title I In-School Youth with WIOA ITAs. The waiver eliminates the disadvantage to enrolling a student in need as an in-school youth. This allows DLR to help those who are in need of assistance to complete their high school education and provide a pathway to post-secondary. In addition, it allows DLR to assist individuals who have started a program of study but have a significant life change that negatively impacts their ability to continue towards their goals. The ultimate goal of this waiver is to provide program flexibility to help youth who need assistance in reaching their employment goals, regardless of their current educational status.

The waiver allows DLR to operate our in-school youth program in alignment with our out-of-school youth program. This eases implementation for a small state like South Dakota, where the same staff work with both in- and out-of-school youth. This waiver will allow staff to focus on the participant and not worry about the program differences between in-school and out-of-school youth. This waiver also allows in-school youth who have been enrolled with us for years to access DLR funds for post-secondary assistance, something some enrollees have been working toward for years.

Waiver 4: WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b) – Support Services for employed Adults in Follow-up.

The State of South Dakota is requesting a waiver from WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b), which requires support services to be provided to individuals who are participating in career or training services and are necessary to enable individuals to participate in career service or training activities. DLR is requesting a waiver to allow support services for employed Adults who were enrolled in WIOA and are in follow-up, as mentioned in *America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age*.

This waiver would allow the State to continue supporting employed participants during follow-up by addressing barriers that arise once they are no longer receiving benefits, thereby incentivizing career advancement and long-term self-sufficiency. This waiver may allow South Dakota to achieve its employment goals by helping participants maintain employment for longer durations of time, increasing overall after-exit employment rates to meet our projected rates.

- (2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

There is no state or local statutory or regulatory barrier to implementing the requested waivers.

- (3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

Waiver 1: WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 – Out-Of-School Youth Expenditure

Goal: Maintain the 20% Work Experience Expenditure Requirement.

Maintaining this requirement has always been a focus of the youth program and has historically been a struggle. The majority of our work experience has been spent on in-school youth during the summer and with Job Corps students prior to their exit from Job Corps. Recently, we have switched our focus to growing our out-of-school youth and continuing to serve the in-school youth we already have enrolled. The number of in-school youth has dwindled due to youth completing high school and no longer needing services.

Our other target area for work experiences is to Job Corps. The last few months have seen uncertainty in the future of the Job Corps, so we will need to find a way to increase our work experience funding in other populations.

The plan is to tap into targeted in-school youth populations and provide work experiences that accommodate their school schedule. Likely, this will mean summer employment. Allowing the request waiver will enable us to target summer work experiences for newly enrolled in-school youth and help us make a final push to reach the required amount. Through concentrated efforts, the program made it to 32% in PY24, where PY23 was at 22% and PY22 was at 29%. Work experience holds high value for youth because they gain skills, wages, and experience. Our goal is to maintain 25% or higher with these costs despite the changing demographics we are facing.

Goal: Increase WIOA enrollment for youth currently in or aged out of foster care.

With our focus changing to out-of-school youth, in-school youth enrollments have gone down. One of the populations impacted by this is in-school youth with a connection to the foster care system. In PY22, 13.7% of youth enrollments were in-school youth with Foster Care Connect. Program Year 23 saw this number drop to 5.9%, with the number getting as low as 2% in PY24. By leveraging our current partnership with the South Dakota Department of Social Services Independent Living Program, which case-manages foster care youth, the Career Launch team would work to increase that number. Our goal for PY26 is to have 7% of our total enrollments be in-school youth with a foster care connection. For PY27, our goal would be 11%.

Waiver 2: WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) - Allow Local Workforce Development Areas to Count Both WIOA Local Youth Formula Funds and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Funds Toward the Minimum 20 Percent Expenditure Requirement for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience

Goal: Increase the number of experiences offered to youth TANF participants.

Likely, youth TANF clients are going to be young parents. They will not have the work history of an older adult, and they have children they need to care for and provide for. By beginning a youth TANF client off in a work experience, they will have the time and ability to work and build a routine of getting their children to daycare and getting themselves to work. They will also have the opportunity to learn how to communicate unexpected absences while they are under the safety of a work experience and have an employment specialist to help coach them through these conversations. These skills can be perfected through a work experience, so that when it comes to full-time employment, or an OJT, they will be more likely to retain that employment. Program year 22 had 11 Youth TANF work experiences, PY23 had one, and

PY24 saw a total of six. Our goal for this waiver is to increase the number of work experiences by 25% each program year, from PY24.

Goal: Increase the number of on-the-job trainings for youth TANF participants.

TANF clients participating in on-the-job training (OJT) have seen a decline since the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the TANF and youth program at DLR is to increase the number of youth in OJTs. PY24 saw one youth OJT. Our goal is to increase the percentage of youth OJTs by 100% for the next two program years. By entering into OJTs, TANF clients are able to continue to receive assistance through case management and support services as they work their way off TANF benefits.

Waiver 3: 20 CFR 681.550 – Individual Training Account Usage for In-School Youth

Goal: Meet or exceed the negotiated performance measures for measurable skills gains and credentials.

Since PY22, the youth program's measurable skills gains have consistently exceeded the negotiated performance measures by 2% to 6%.

In contrast, achieving the negotiated performance levels for credential attainment has been more challenging. Program Year 22, the youth program fell short of the negotiated rate for credentials by 6.4%. Performance improved in PY23, with only 1.2% below the target. In PY24, the program exceeded the credential attainment measure for the first time by a modest 1.7% margin.

As currently enrolled in-school youth complete high school and leave performance, the denominator will not include this population. This removes a steady source of measurable skills gains and credentials. The remaining population will mainly consist of Job Corps students and GED seekers living on their own. Generally, this population tends to experience instability and lower completion rates, despite everyone's best efforts.

Allowing DLR to utilize ITAs for in-school youth would enable continued support for the currently enrolled in-school youth who are graduating and moving on to post-secondary education or students who need assistance finishing their education. Both populations will increase the overall population for these measures and will assist DLR in meeting or exceeding the negotiated performance measures.

Waiver 4: WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b) – Support Services for employed Adults in Follow-up.

Goal: Increase Performance for Employment Rates in Q2 and Q4

Providing support services to employed individuals will help with barriers that negatively impact employment. Losing access to transportation, needing new tools or work attire, and a lack of childcare are all potential barriers that may arise during the follow-up period and can cause a loss of employment. We will help individuals with these barriers through support services to prevent employment loss and increase the 2nd- and 4th-quarter after-exit employment rates to more closely meet the proposed level of performance measures. This may, in turn, also lead to lower re-enrollment rates.

- (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.*

Waiver 1: WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 – Out-Of-School Youth Expenditure

The waiver enables the allocation of additional youth funds to provide enrolled in-school youth with paid work experiences. This not only allows them to enhance their skills but also builds a work history and helps them acquire references through work-based learning. Offering work experiences to youth connects them to employers and opportunities they may otherwise not have the ability to find on their own, especially if it is an experience only provided to individuals participating in a work experience program. Establishing a connection with youth in the foster care system during high school enables them to determine a plan for future education and career goals.

Through structured career exploration with DLR staff, youth gain exposure to various fields and receive guidance in processing the information gathered to make informed decisions about their future education and career. This proactive approach empowers youth to make well-informed, long-term decisions at a young age.

By establishing a relationship that supports youth in the foster care system in pursuing their career goals while in high school, the goal is that they continue to work with DLR after they exit the foster care system and disengage from other resources. If they are receiving services that help them work toward education, career, and stability goals while in high school, continuing those services outside of high school will benefit them. Thus, allowing them to start their careers at an earlier age than if they had explored education and careers on their own.

Waiver 2: WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) - Allow Local Workforce Development Areas to Count Both WIOA Local Youth Formula Funds and TANF Funds Toward the Minimum 20 Percent Expenditure Requirement for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience

DLR assists its youth participants with career exploration services and work experiences as they work to set their education or career goals. Youth TANF participants will have access to support, both financial and practical, through the youth program. This support can assist in finding daycare, creating a routine to make work goals easier, and providing financial support with any costs associated with entering the workforce.

By providing work-based learning opportunities, young parents will be given the chance to learn to communicate with their employers, gain insight into a career that fits their interests and needs and earn subsidized funds while they are still on the TANF program, potentially easing the burden of ceasing TANF benefits with employment. All of this helps lead to stabilization and motivation when it comes time for full-time employment, which can start with a TANF-funded on-the-job training.

Engaging with employers who have young parents specifically teaches employers how to work with this population, which often has needs that crop up unexpectedly. By engaging employers who might not typically hire this population through a work experience or on-the-job training and helping them work through these issues, we are introducing employers to a market they would not have otherwise engaged.

Waiver 3: 20 CFR 681.550 – Individual Training Account Usage for In-School Youth

DLR is addressing skills gaps in the current workforce by providing financial support for occupational skills training in high-wage, high-demand fields for disadvantaged in-school youth. This initiative aims to enhance career advancement

prospects for all participants, extending beyond out-of-school youth. With financial assistance and career exploration services from DLR, in-school youth will have improved chances of achieving stronger employment outcomes and meet employers' workforce needs.

Waiver 4: WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b) – Support Services for employed Adults in Follow-up.

This waiver request is intended to help support the improvement of job and career results. During employment, some barriers may continue to exist or arise over time due to changing circumstances. These barriers could lead to a loss of employment and their progress towards self-sufficiency. By providing support services during the follow-up period after achieving employment, we may work to help hinder the barriers that could cause a loss of employment. This should encourage longevity in the workforce and gradually ease the shift away from reliance on public support programs. Helping to prevent loss of employment also helps to support employers. Employers will see a higher return on their investment in training and spend less money on recruiting and less time on training. Longer terms of employment would likely lead to advancement in the career, benefiting the employer and employee.

- (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

Waiver 1: WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 – Out-Of-School Youth Expenditure

The initial target audience for in-school assistance is our Independent Living partner, which is overseen by the South Dakota Department of Social Services and serves youth in the foster care system. We would partner with Independent Living caseworkers to ensure that those nearing exit from the foster care system have work experience to build references and skills, and to help determine what kind of employment or post-secondary education they need to pursue for their career goals. This is our first strategic population for in-school youth partnership. There could be more based on the performance of this initiative.

Waiver 2: WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) - Allow Local Workforce Development Areas to Count Both WIOA Local Youth Formula Funds and TANF Funds Toward the Minimum 20 Percent Expenditure Requirement for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience

The population impacted by this waiver will be TANF recipients, who will likely be young parents. DLR plans to offer more work experiences and on-the-job training to young workers. This would have a positive impact on work history, workforce skills, income, confidence, and stability for those entering either service.

Waiver 3: 20 CFR 681.550 – Individual Training Account Usage for In-School Youth

Individuals who are low-income and have at least one additional barrier to employment are eligible for the in-school youth program. These barriers include being basic skills deficient, an English language learner, an ex-offender, homeless, currently in or aged out of foster care, parenting, or having a disability. Individuals with these barriers and needs will benefit from this waiver.

Waiver 4: WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b) – Support Services for employed Adults in Follow-up.

The individuals affected by this waiver are employed adults who were recently exited from WIOA Adult and are in follow-up. These individuals may possess barriers such as being basic skills deficient, English language learner, ex-offender, homeless, at risk of homelessness, or having a disability. This waiver would have a positive impact on these individuals by assisting with maintaining employment and promoting self-sufficiency.

(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 comments by business and organized labor, on the waiver.*
- (E) *Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.*

All information below is true for all waivers.

Monitoring of programs and their progress in implementing the waiver will be completed annually, as established in Policy 6.7, Oversight and Monitoring.

While South Dakota has no local board, this state plan, including waivers, will be out for public comment. In addition, the state Workforce Development Council will have this plan as an agenda item for review and include time for public comment.

Annual progress on all waivers will be included in the annual data report DLR issues each year.

(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.**

Waiver 1: WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 – Out-Of-School Youth Expenditure

This waiver allows DLR to expend up to 50% of youth funding on In-School Youth.

Increase Career Exploration services to youth regardless of their educational status.

Over the past several program years, the in-school youth program has been growing and spending at a faster pace than the out-of-school youth program. To address this imbalance, the focus shifted to expanding the out-of-school youth program while continuing to serve our currently enrolled in-school youth.

Since submitting our last waiver request, DLR has restructured to a statewide teams model based on customers served and has made adjustments to the WIOA Title I Youth program. Previously, all employment specialists in the state had the opportunity to work with youth, which made budgeting and staffing a challenge. When right-sizing the program, twelve Employment Specialists were able to focus on the youth program. Currently, the program has a dedicated staff of nine employment specialists located throughout the state to serve both in- and out-of-school youth.

With fewer staff, the program was unable to maintain the previous number of enrolled participants. This trend is also reflected in the number of Career Exploration services we provided over the last four program years:

- PY21 - 1171
- PY22 – 2025
- PY23 – 833
- PY24 - 664

To help offset this decline, the youth program is improving case management services to focus on career goals rather than employment goals.

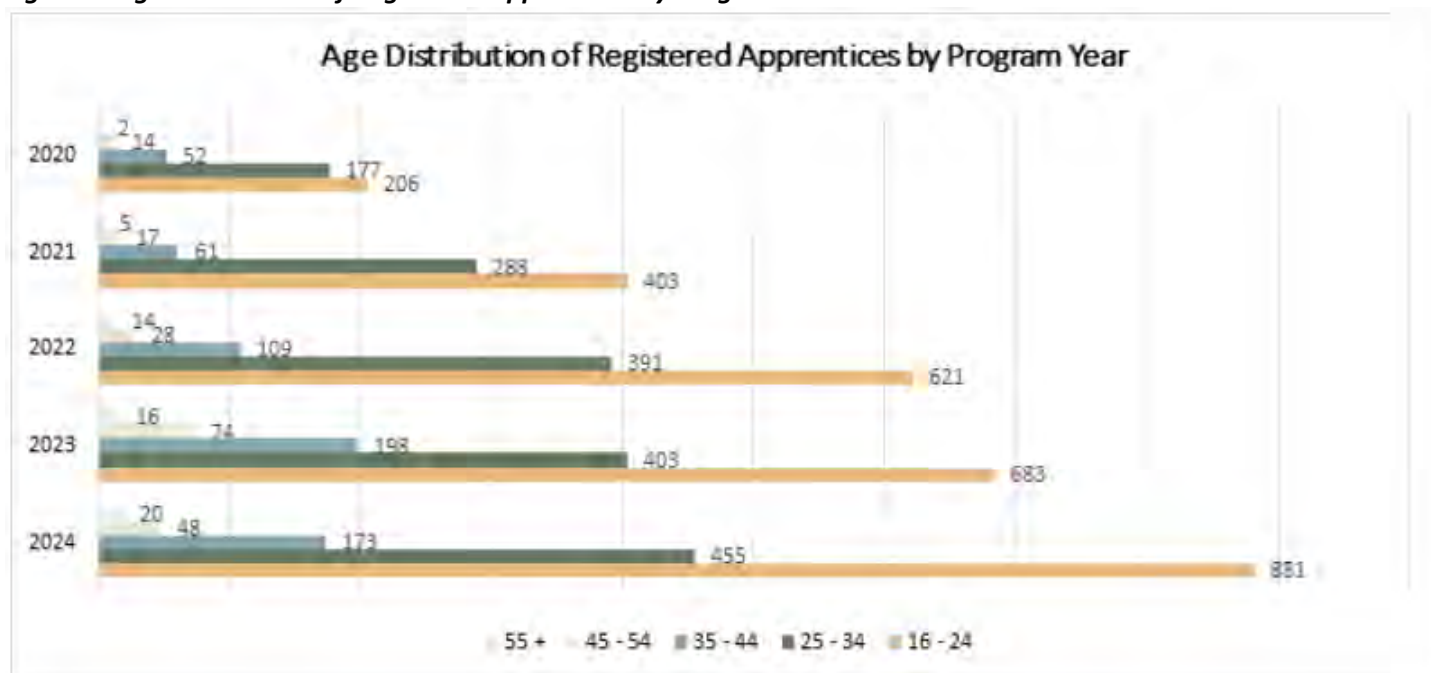
Increase the percentage of Work-Based Learning services to youth despite their education status. This includes work experiences, internships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and job shadows.

Going into program year 2024, in-school youth spending was on a trajectory to outspend out-of-school youth spending. As a result, the program focused on enrolling out-of-school youth, while continuing services for currently enrolled in-school youth. While this goal was achieved through an increase in work-based learning experiences, from 17.6% in PY23 to 29.5% in PY24, it has not come without its challenges, as many out-of-school youth in our state are already engaged in the workforce.

Enhance partnerships with schools and businesses to increase youth apprenticeship opportunities.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Registered Apprentices by Program Year illustrates a steady increase in the number of apprentices aged 16-24 over the year. This age group experienced a 29% increase in participation, with 881 individuals accounting for 56% of the total apprentice population. Through robust partnerships at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, collaboration and innovation are expanding via Start Today SD's Pathway Partners and Apprenticeship Intermediary efforts.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Registered Apprentices by Program Year



Waiver 2: WIOA Section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b) - Allow Local Workforce Development Areas to Count Both WIOA Local Youth Formula Funds and TANF Funds Toward the Minimum 20 Percent Expenditure Requirement for Paid or Unpaid Work Experience

This is a new request. There is no historical data to provide.

Waiver 3: 20 CFR 681.550 – Individual Training Account Usage for In-School Youth

This waiver allows DLR to operate our in-school youth program in alignment with our out-of-school youth program. In addition, it increases post-secondary training opportunities for South Dakota's future workforce.

Increase measurable skills gains for South Dakota's In-School Youth.

The overall goal of the youth program is to support youth in entering the workforce successfully. Developing strong skills and knowledge is essential for success in any career path.

Over the last three program years, measurable skills gains have increased each year. In PY22, the in-school youth population achieved a measurable skills gain rate of 59.8%. This increased to 62% in PY23, and further to 73.9% in PY24. These measurable skills gains reflect a positive performance in education, which directly contributes to stronger workforce readiness and long-term career success.

Increase post-secondary options for disadvantaged In-School Youth.

With the implementation of this waiver, DLR has observed a steady increase in the number of in-school youth participating in occupational skills training. In PY22, 2.9% of in-school youth received occupational skills training. This figure rose to 4.8% in PY23. By the end of PY24, participation had reached 11.11%, the highest percentage recorded over the past three program years.

Waiver 4: WIOA Section 134 (d)(2)(a), 20 CFR 680.910 (a)(1), and 20 CFR 680.910 (b) – Support Services for employed Adults in Follow-up.

This is a new waiver request. There is no existing outcome data to provide.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

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;
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;
3. The State has 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;
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);
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;
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;
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);
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;
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;
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
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);

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM

(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.

South Dakota will continue to utilize state merit staff employees.

- (2) Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff are able to provide high-quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

The State of South Dakota's Bureau of Human Resources and Administration has a Learning Management System (LMS) with a variety of on-demand resources. In addition, they offer workshops throughout the state on topics such as leadership training, civil treatment in the workplace, and communication. DLR also has an LMS where we can upload on-demand training created internally, as well as resources provided through the LMS subscription. Annually, DLR hosts an internal Workforce Conference offering professional development opportunities for all staff. Topics include items such as human trafficking, accent biases, embracing change, serving justice-involved individuals, poverty simulations, etc. Training is also offered in partnership with other workforce partners, such as the annual Vocational Rehabilitation Conference or Adult Education Summer Summit. Internally, DLR holds statewide webinars when new policies are implemented or program-specific in-depth training for those impacted. Partner programs and guest speakers host statewide webinars to share information on Job Corps, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and more.

- (3) Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, and the training provided for Employment Service and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

Job Service Offices across the state have Employment Specialists who are cross-trained in Wagner-Peyser and Title I programs and have basic training on what is expected of a claimant to receive reemployment benefits. They are not required to be experts in the field of unemployment. South Dakota has developed a group of Reemployment Assistance Claims Specialists. These individuals were previously Employment Specialists working workforce programs, but during the pandemic, they were trained in Reemployment Assistance. Employment Specialists connect to the Reemployment Assistance call center or Claims Specialists to assist with their customers' needs or questions. Changes to policy or procedures are conducted through a statewide workforce memo with representation from the Claims Specialists during memo review meetings. In addition, the Reemployment Assistance team provides training when changes are made. Recorded training courses are available for staff regarding eligibility issues and making referrals to the Reemployment Assistance team for adjudication questions or information.

(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.

In South Dakota, all claims are completed either via telephone or online. Every DLR office has brochures on how to file for Reemployment Benefits. All DLR Job Service Offices can refer a claimant to the website or the calling number. For claimants who may need additional assistance, job service staff can help individuals connect directly with trained staff via a call queue. The state has provided a special phone number that is not available to the public and is only used for individuals requesting assistance at the Job Service Office. In addition to this direct linkage, numerous publications are available in each office and online to assist those individuals who wish to utilize self-guided tools.

(c) Describe the State’s strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

The Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program will continue as a major resource to provide employment, re-employment and training services to individuals who qualify for Reemployment Assistance (unemployment) benefits. Individuals are selected through a statistical model that identifies claimants most likely to exhaust their Reemployment benefits. Once selected, the claimant receives a letter guiding them to a virtual platform to sign and upload documents or to contact a Job Service Office for an appointment. The overall strategy is to provide a seamless process for co-enrollment into WIOA Wagner-Peyser and Title I Dislocated Worker programs. Co-enrollment enables statewide staff to provide comprehensive assessments, labor market information, case management, training, support and resources that address barriers to employment.

A specialized team of Employment Specialists is cross-trained in Wagner-Peyser and Title I programs. WIOA and the Reemployment Assistance Division work cohesively to maintain the integrity of the RESEA program, where training is completed in unison for RESEA and Reemployment Assistance teams. South Dakota established a dedicated group of Reemployment Assistance Claims Specialists. These Claims Specialists were formerly Employment Specialists working workforce programs, and during the pandemic, they underwent specialized training in Reemployment Assistance. Employment Specialists can connect with the Reemployment Assistance call center or collaborate with Claims Specialists to address customer inquiries and needs.

Other unemployed individuals who do not qualify for unemployment insurance or under the definition of WIOA Dislocated worker may qualify for WIOA Adult Services or under other federal grants when available. Although these programs do not provide a weekly financial benefit, they may provide the same assessments, labor market information, resources, training and supportive services as funding allows.

South Dakota, like many states, struggles to provide comprehensive services for those receiving reemployment benefits and other unemployed individuals when budgets have been flat-funded for so many years. To help alleviate this funding shortfall, South Dakota applied for the Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training Dislocated Worker Grant, which will provide opportunities for individuals selected for RESEA, other unemployed individuals, and long-term unemployed individuals receiving SNAP and TANF benefits, or who are incarcerated.

(d) Describe how the State will use Wagner-Peyser Act funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between the Employment Service and UI, as appropriate, including the following:

- (1) Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

Coordination between the Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs begins with the requirement that all UI claimants register with the employment service system to fulfill UI eligibility requirements. Regardless of the claim filing method, online or by phone. The Unemployment and Wagner-Peyser systems are connected to automatically register the claimant in our Management Information System, which we call SDWORKS. This allows for an easy transition into and meets the requirement to register with employment services. As a result of the UI claimants being registered in the employment services system, this expedites the availability of services and labor exchange. All claimants have the option to work with Employment Specialists in person or remotely. Individuals can use SDWORKS on their own or with an Employment Specialist who is trained to provide assessments for job placement, information on training, educational or supportive services.

- (2) Registration of UI claimants with the State’s employment service if required by State law;

In South Dakota, SDCL 61-6-1(1): An unemployed individual is eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

(1) The individual has registered for work at and thereafter has continued to report at an employment office in accordance with rules promulgated by the department pursuant to chapter 1-26. However, the department may, by rule, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subdivision as to individuals attached to regular jobs and as to such other types of cases or situations with respect to which the department finds that compliance with the requirements would be oppressive, or would be inconsistent with the purposes of this title. No such rule may conflict with this chapter.

(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

47:06:04:17.01 of the South Dakota Unemployment Insurance Act states: An individual who has filed a claim for benefits shall submit to periodic eligibility assessments as frequently as the public employment office schedules an assessment. The frequency of the eligibility assessments shall be determined by the following considerations:

- (1) An individual's potential for being recalled to work by the individual's former employer;
- (2) An individual's reason for separating from the previous employer;
- (3) An individual's potential for employment within the individual's occupation and area of residence.

An individual who fails to report for a scheduled eligibility assessment shall be denied benefits for the week in which the eligibility assessment was scheduled and for every subsequent week until the individual reschedules an assessment or establishes good cause for failing to report.

47:06:04:17.02: Unless the secretary of the Department of Labor and Regulation determines that an individual has completed reemployment services, such as job search assistance services, or there is justifiable cause for an individual not to participate in such services, an unemployed individual is eligible to receive benefits for any week only if the individual participates in reemployment services determined by the secretary to be necessary for one of the following reasons:

- (1) By means of a profiling system administered to an individual when the first benefit payment is issued, the secretary determines that the individual is likely to exhaust regular benefits and need reemployment services; or
- (2) Based on an evaluation of the individual's experience, skills, and education level, the secretary determines that reemployment services will reduce the length of unemployment.

Justifiable cause includes factors such as attending approved training or obtaining employment which will start within three weeks.

(4) **Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources**.

Individuals who require additional assistance with their reemployment efforts may be identified through various means, including participation in the UI Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program, agency correspondence, in-person contact at a Job Service Office, or contact by phone. Customers receive formal and informal assessments to identify barriers to re-employment that are addressed through an employment Plan from Employment Specialists representing the Wagner-Peyser and Dislocated Worker programs. The employment plan establishes goals and progressive objectives needed to obtain and retain long-term, sustainable employment. Services may include financial

literacy, job search workshops, adult education or literacy, supportive services, work-based training, occupational skills training, apprenticeships, veterans services, youth services, and vocational rehabilitation, to name a few. Wagner-Peyser Employment Specialists collaborate with partner programs to offer a broad range of services to meet the customers' employment goals.

(e) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). *Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need.*

- (1) **Assessment of Need.** *Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include, but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.*

Based on agricultural employer activity in PY2025 (the last fully completed program year at the writing of this AOP), DLR Local Offices placed 5,495 job orders. 611 of those orders were placed by agricultural employers, making up 11% of the total job orders. Of the agricultural job orders, 600 were H2A related (98%). H2A is primarily used in lieu of year-round workers to help fill peak load needs of the farmer or rancher. Most H2A workers in the state are requested for planting (typically late April and May) and for harvest (typically October and November).

The high percentage of H2A applications through the Foreign Labor Certification program administered by DLR and ETA in South Dakota reflects changes driven by the growing diversity of South Dakota's economy, the mobility of individuals, increased interest in agriculture, and an aging ag producer population. DLR remains committed to providing opportunities for both agricultural producers seeking permanent employees and individuals seeking a career in agriculture. For individuals identified as migrant or seasonal employees, DLR will assist them by promoting training through WIOA Title I or the WIOA 167 Farmworker Jobs Training Program (FJTP). Activities and partnerships will be discussed later in this AOP.

DLR offers a wide range of services to assist participants in achieving their employment goals. Wagner-Peyser services are designed to help participants with their employment needs, including finding jobs, creating resumes, and preparing for interviews. WIOA services provide training opportunities, such as work experience and on-the-job training, as well as support services, including housing, transportation, work attire, and childcare. All of these services are offered to MSFWs.

South Dakota has a relatively low number of Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs), estimated to be approximately 200-250 statewide. The lack of labor-intensive row crops in high-count MSFW states affects the numbers. In program year 2025, DLR enrolled 17 MSFWs into the Wagner-Peyser program compared to 5,762 non-MSFWs enrolled. This was a decrease of 65% from the previous program year of enrolling 26. DLR will continue outreach efforts and collaborate with the NFJP to increase the number of MSFWs served, so we can continue to assist with employment, training, housing, and other related needs.

- (2) **Provide an assessment of the agricultural activity in the State:** *1) identify the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identify any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.*

Agricultural data comes from the USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture (most recent available data):

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/South_Dakota/sdv1.pdf

Top Agriculture commodities based on the value of sales include:

- Corn - \$3,934,729,000
- Soybeans - \$2,422,955,00
- Wheat - \$567,809,000
- Sorghum - \$86,865,000
- Other grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas - \$365,771,000

Common labor-intensive crops not grown in South Dakota include tobacco and cotton. Labor-intensive crops grown in South Dakota include:

- Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod - \$30,319,000
- Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes - \$7,019,000
- Fruits, tree nuts – 1,614,000
- Berries - \$640,000
- Cultivated Christmas trees - \$185,000

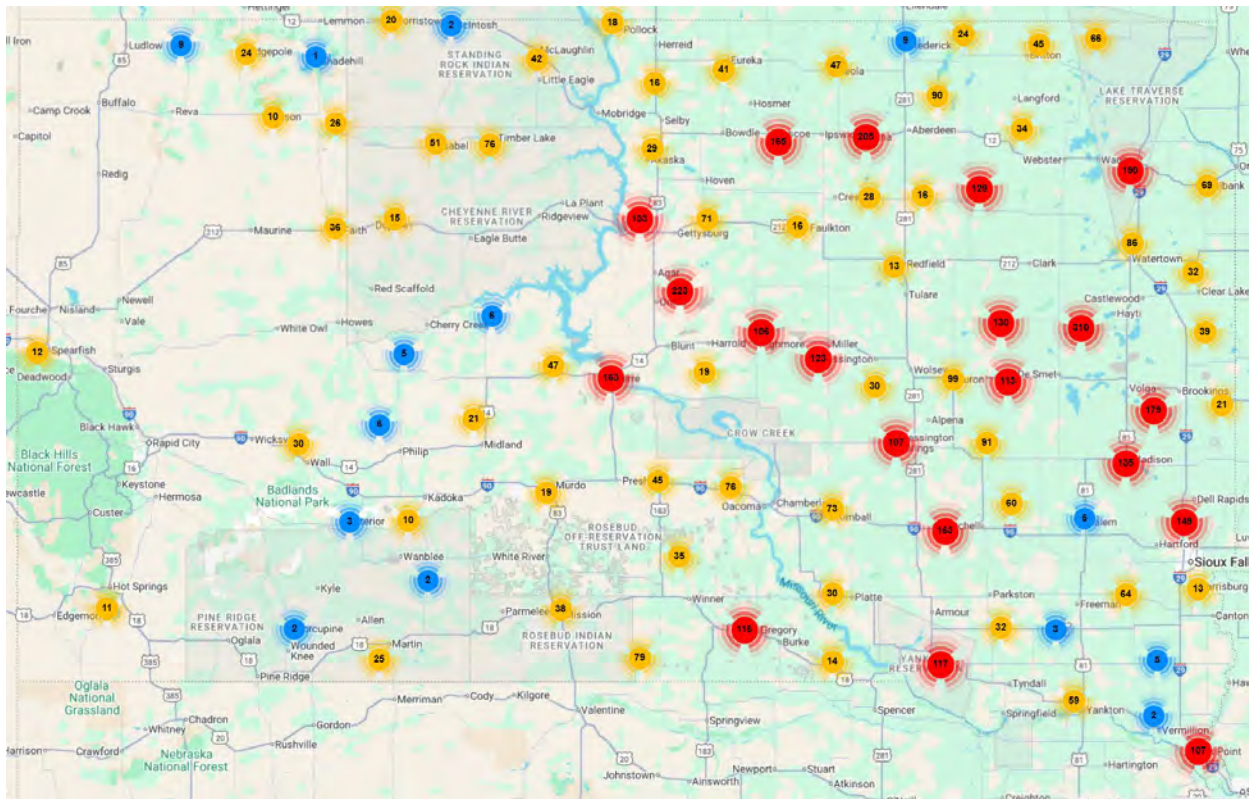
Top counties with labor-intensive crops (Vegetable and melon farming, fruit and tree nut farming, and greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production), based on the number of farms, include:

- Minnehaha County – 50 farms
- Lawrence County – 32 farms
- Pennington County – 27 farms
- Yankton County – 22 farms
- Lincoln County – 20 farms

H-2A data comes from [Spotlight \(tcbmi.com\)](https://tcbmi.com)

Based on the number of H-2A job orders received during program year 2025, the months of heavy activity include February and August.

Based on a heat map of the number of H-2As requested during program year 2025, the geographic area of prime activity is the central and eastern part of the state.



The State is primarily hiring H-2A workers for agricultural needs, with 98% of all agricultural job orders in program year 2025 being H-2A. It is estimated that the approximate number of MSFWs in South Dakota is between 200 and 250 statewide. Based on Spotlight data, H-2A job orders for program year 2025 requested 3,154 H-2As, indicating a scarcity in the agricultural workforce.

- (3) **Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers** by summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

The migrant and seasonal farmwork populations, particularly those that meet the definition of MSFW under Section 167, have been predominantly eligible seasonal farmworkers involved in beef cattle farming and ranching, livestock and poultry processing, dairy farming, hog farming and confinement, small grain harvest, including corn farming, and more recently, beef cattle farming operations. Beef cattle processing, which includes the handling, packaging, processing, or grading of beef before market in the northeast central part of the state, has attracted some migrant farmworkers. South Dakota is not considered a “significant state,” and as a result, BHSSC/NFJP does not see a heavy presence of migrant farmworkers like other grantee states, such as California. BHSSC/NFJP reaches out to migrant individuals during these encounters, informing them of WIOA NFJP 167 and DLR services. NFJP collaborates with DLR local offices to coordinate and provide much-needed services to MSFWs.

The most recent sample of BHSSC NFJP participants illustrated that an individual's average income at enrollment is approximately \$15,500.00 per year. The income guidelines were increased to 150% of the federal poverty limit, allowing NFJP to include more MSFWs who would otherwise be ineligible for services under the 100% guidelines; the increase was long overdue and implemented in July of 2021. Additionally, the new DOL/ETA Guidance - TEGL 18-16 Change 2 -

now states that NFJP grantees are to “use the net income to calculate an individual’s family income, if it is available.” Since someone’s net income will be lower than their gross income, more applicants will be eligible as low-income for the NFJP program. This applies to every method for calculating low-income status that requires using the applicant’s actual income, e.g., total family income (either 150% of the poverty guidelines or 70% of the LLSIL), free or reduced-price lunch, or individuals with a disability.

Approximately eighty-five percent of the participants are male, and over 90% are seasonal farm and ranch workers. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers who meet Case Managers are from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The predominant language is Latin American Spanish.

The most common barriers to employment for MSFWs, cited by BHSSC outreach workers (Case Managers), towards gains in substantial employment are:

- Lack of technical or marketable skills
- Limited education levels
- Limited work experience outside of agriculture
- Limited English proficiency
- Limited personal and financial resources
- Access to needed employment, training, and family services

The overall goals and objectives of the BHSSC NFJP include serving 135 eligible farm workers per year, 125 adults, and 10 youth. Through effective education and training strategies, including optimal job placements based on current Labor Market Information supplied by DLR, On-the-Job training (OJT), and formal education at the State’s Technical Institutes, the BHSSC/NFJP team has consistently met federally prescribed performance standards. The most recent BHSSC/NFJP performance outcomes from WIPS QPR include the following: Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit Goal 89.5%, Employment Rate 4th Quarter 89.3%, Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit Goal \$11,040, Credential Attainment Goal 87.4%, Measurable Skills Gain 91.0%, and Retention with Same Employer 96.2%. All performance results are from the most recent quarterly performance report, ending in the fourth quarter (April – June 2023), in which NFJP exceeds national performance targets.

The number of MSFW workers traveling to or passing through South Dakota, as stated above, has significantly decreased over the years, as SD is not considered a significant state.

- (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:*
- (A) ***Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.***

To advocate for MSFWs, the SMA encouraged offices to engage in MSFW outreach throughout the year. In the 2025 program year, South Dakota SWAs conducted 16 MSFW outreach activities. Outreach efforts included booths at state and county fairs, booths at high schools and colleges, booths at agricultural events like 4-H, FFA Conventions, and livestock shows, and going to local gathering areas of MSFWs, including Farm and Ranch stores, grain elevators, and Ag Supply stores to reach out to local ag workers to explain DLR services and hang up flyers.

There were also 22 joint outreach events between DLR Job Service staff and the NFJP. Outreach efforts included community partner meetings, career fairs and expos, educational institution kickoffs and events, and conference and training events.

Additionally, the FLC team conducted 1,347 outreach events during housing inspections, reaching 2,548 H2A MSFWs. The main outreach service provided was to inform MSFWs of their farmworker rights.

DLR staff's goals are to promote DLR services to identified MSFWs. Information on services, the complaint process, and farmworker rights and protections is disseminated and presented during outreach events. Dual enrollment in DLR programs and NFJP programs is an additional goal of the partnership.

DLR has designed an MSFW outreach reporting process that allows each Job Service Office to report its outreach efforts to the State Monitor Advocate (SMA). The process includes completing a Microsoft Form. The form captures:

- The Job Service Office
- Date Outreach was conducted
- Location of the outreach
- Goals and objectives of the MSFW Outreach event
- How many MSFW contacts were made
- Type of services provided
- Number of requests for job service services received

When the form is submitted, the data is imported into an MSFW Outreach Worksheet that the SMA monitors.

*(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.*

South Dakota's State Monitor Advocate provides technical assistance to field staff and support agency staff throughout the year.

The SMA developed the 8.10 Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) policy in February 2023. The policy was introduced to staff during the SD DLR Workforce Memo 2023-001 on February 21, 2023. The policy explains what the ARS is and the SWA's requirements.

MSFW Data Collection, MSFW Outreach, General Complaint Process (All Staff), Complaint Process for Managers/Designees, and Outreach Staff training courses were created in DLR Learn, our learning management system, and are now available to all staff. Outreach staff are required to take all the classes and earn the 'Outreach Staff Badge.'

Summary of MSFW-related courses completed by SWA staff in PY25 includes 11 Agricultural Outreach Worker's Training Module, 25 Complaint Process for Managers/Designee, 57 General Complaint Process (All Staff), 46 Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) SDWORKS Data Collection, 14 MSFW Complaint System Training Module, and 13 MSFW Outreach. This resulted in SWA staff completing 166 MSFW-related courses being completed.

*(C) **Increasing outreach staff training and awareness across core programs**, including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.*

MSFW outreach is a continual focus of each SWA. A designated outreach staff member is appointed in each SWA and is required to achieve the 'Outreach Staff Badge.' This is accomplished by completing the following courses in our learning

management system: MSFW Data Collection, MSFW Outreach, General Complaint Process (All Staff), Complaint Process for Managers/Designee, and Outreach Staff. During annual monitors, the SMA verifies that each designated MSFW Outreach staff member has obtained the Outreach Staff Badge.

- (D) Providing outreach staff professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high-quality services to both job seekers and employers.***

As mentioned above, outreach staff have multiple professional development activities available with DLR's learning management system and cross-training opportunities with our NFJP partners.

- (E) Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.***

BHSSC operates the WIOA 167, or the National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP), in South Dakota. DLR and BHSSC have an ongoing partnership agreement to provide MSFWs with additional services and training opportunities in South Dakota. BHSSC maintains a physical presence in the Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Pierre serving areas. They are also invited to DLR One-Stop Career Centers to speak at staff meetings and are annually asked to attend and present at the Workforce Development Council (WDC) meeting to discuss the NFJP program.

See section 4 for coordinated outreach efforts with the NFJP grantee.

- (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; and***
 - (ii) How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.***

South Dakota maintains a strategic presence in 12 locations (and two itinerant offices) throughout South Dakota. None of the DLR One-Stop Career Centers are considered to be significant MSFW offices, nor are any bilingual offices. However, each office is prepared to provide the necessary services to any and all individuals who need staff-assisted services or can provide self-service job-seeking information.

Each DLR job service office has individuals trained in a variety of programs, including Title III Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I, Title II Adult Education and Literacy, and strong relationships with local DHS Vocational Rehabilitation offices under Title IV. Although several offices have a varying degree of physical presence with partner agencies, partnering presence is available wherever one goes in South Dakota, or the ability to have outreach services provided. South Dakota is, again, in a unique position with WIOA since Titles I, II, and III all fall under the administrative and programmatic delivery of DLR. Strong relationships with Vocational Rehabilitation Title IV partners provide a solid foundation for all core WIOA partners. Additionally, required partnerships, such as TANF, SNAP E&T, SCSEP, WIOA 167, and others are already directly within our offices or a mere phone call away to provide necessary services to an individual. Other services provided under this umbrella include, but are not limited to;

- Assistance with registration into the Wagner-Peyser (Employment Services) process to allow an individual to obtain additional services with other programs.
- Assist with job search, resume writing, interview skills, and soft-skills information through the Job Search Assistance Program (JSAP).
- Provide an array of written and electronic information (websites) of various services provided by the One-Stop Career Centers and One-Stop partners.

- Individuals are provided information regarding labor rights, how to file a complaint, protections, and responsibilities of employers when interviewing and hiring employees.
- DLR One-Stop Career Centers will provide information and encouragement to refer and assess an eligible individual to WIOA Title I for further understanding of the person's need for training, what type of training, interests, and possible support services are needed.
- Each DLR Job Service office manager and select staff have been trained on taking any staff or MSFW complaint, and who to contact and/or refer the issue to if elevation of the complaint is needed.
- Offices have access to Language Link, a contracted, telephonic interpretive service to assist Limited English Proficient individuals when assisting. This is a no-charge service to any LEP individual who requires it. This assists the state in delivering services while maintaining the universality of the One-Stop Career Center.
- Necessary referrals to community support entities and provision of support service funds when warranted.
- Career guidance, interest inventories, skills assessments, and other support structures necessary to assist a person towards successful outcomes.

Agricultural employers are treated the same as non-ag employers regarding services provided to ag employers. There is no differentiation between the two. Every employer is looking for employees to do the work, employees with certain skills, employees capable of showing up to work on time each day scheduled, and employees who can keep an eye out for a labor supply to continue to fill their jobs. Therefore, ag employers can receive the same level of services and information as non-ag employers. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Assistance with online employer registrations for access to SDWORKS to provide a wide array of DLR services
- Placing job orders on behalf of employers
- Assistance with labor needs
- Provide Labor Market Information
- Provide an opportunity for an employer to participate in job/career fairs
- Recruitment activities to locate and obtain employees
- Assistance with the H2A Temporary labor certification program for agricultural employers who can substantiate a labor shortage in their area for the occupation he/she desire to fill
- DLR provides housing inspections for ag-employers who file under H2A guidelines
- DLR One-Stop Career Centers provide employers with compliance posters about labor law
- Provide information and screening of individuals for job training and WOTC eligibility
- Local DLR One-Stop Career Centers also have individuals trained to speak directly with all businesses to advise the business about all services DLR could provide to the employer
- Information on Re-Employment Assistance (RA), formerly known as Unemployment Insurance, and RA Tax provisions and contacts are made available.

(B) Marketing the Complaint System to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

DLR has 10 job service office locations around the state. Each office has designated its manager and assistant managers as Complaint System representatives. If an office does not have an assistant manager, the manager may designate another staff member of his/her choosing to provide backup for the complaint system during the manager's absence.

Everyone designated as the SWA complaint system representative is required to complete the General Complaint Process (All Staff) and Complaint Process for Managers/Designee training courses in DLR's learning management system. All job service and employment law-related complaints must be logged on the complaint system log using the Microsoft Form – Local Office Complaint Log. The log form collects all required information outlined in 20 CFR 658.410.

The SMA reviews all complaints submitted using the complaint log form on an ongoing basis to ensure the complaint system representatives are making correct referrals.

To ensure job seekers, program participants, MSFWs, employers, and the general public are aware of the complaint system, each SWA displays the Equal Opportunity Is the Law poster in predominant places in their office. Additionally, staff conducting MSFW Outreach are trained on the complaint process and provide complaint information to MSFWs during outreach efforts. Outreach staff can also answer any questions or take complaints. If a complaint is taken, the outreach staff will return the intake information to the job service office, log the complaint, and make a referral to the appropriate state and/or federal agency, if applicable.

(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 designed to meet the labor needs of agricultural employers, provide job opportunities to farm workers, and protect the domestic agricultural workforce. The ARS allows for proper disclosure of the terms and conditions of employment to seasonal workers who are recruited from outside the local commuting area.

The SMA developed the 8.10 Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) policy in February 2023. The policy was introduced to staff during the SD DLR Workforce Memo 2023-001 on February 21, 2023. The policy explains what the ARS is and the SWA's requirements. This policy focuses on the internal responsibilities and processes for Job Service Office staff to promote the ARS to agriculture employers, as outlined in 20 CFR 653.501(b). Compliance with this policy will be reviewed during the One-Stop Certification process.

(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 establish new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC) administers the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) for the entire state of South Dakota. As part of the MOU between DLR and NFJP, the DLR SMA and the NFJP partner meet quarterly.

Four meetings were held with our NFJP partner during PY25. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) discussed several key areas of collaboration, including reviewing and updating their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), coordinating joint outreach efforts, and exploring cross-training opportunities. They also received updates on the Business Service Team and addressed new NFJP grant requirements related to building business relationships. Subsequent meetings focused on strengthening their partnership and improving the referral process through a new Microsoft Form system. Their collaboration continued with a Joint Quarterly Partnership meeting and participation in the Governor's Office of Economic Development Conference to further align efforts and share resources.

DLR will continue to build on its collaboration with the NFJP by continuing to hold quarterly meetings to discuss ways to enhance the delivery of services to MSFWs. The meetings between DLR and the NFJP will continue to focus on outreach efforts and collaborative service delivery strategies.

(B) *Review and Public Comment.* In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested

organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

- (i) **The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP.** Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

In compliance with the Single-area State requirements, South Dakota made the Combined State Plan available on the DLR website on 12/12/2025. The public comment period closed on 1/16/2026. An additional public comment period was held during the Workforce Development Council meetings on 12/9/2025 and TBD. All WIOA partner agencies and WDC members were made aware of this public comment period.

- (C) **Data Assessment.** Review the previous four years of Wagner-Peyser Act 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.

The Monitor Advocate System tracks three of the seven Minimum Service Level Indicators (MSLI) and all eight Equity Ratio Indicators (ERI) using participant-level data from quarterly Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) performance submissions. The yearly Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) outcomes (percentages) for ERIs and MSLIs reported in the document must be equal to or greater than the Non-MSFW outcomes to meet the equity indicator. The reports below for program years 25, 24, 23, and 22 indicate whether each indicator was met with a 'Yes' or a 'No'.

Program Year 2025 (07/01/24 – 06/30/25)

MSFW Service Level Indicators Report

PURL File Type: PURL by Program
Region/LVDB : South Dakota
State: South Dakota
Report Period: 4th Quarter 2024
Quarter Type: Rolling 4 Quarters
Report Run Time: 11/04/2025 7:57:28 AM

Equity Ratio Indicators (Cohort Period: 07/01/24 - 06/30/25)						
Indicator Name	MSFW's		Non-MSFW's		Equity	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Yes	No
Total Participants	29	100.00%	5667	100.00%		
1. Received Basic Career Services (Staff-Assisted)	29	100.00%	5662	99.91%	Yes	
2. Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services	29	100.00%	5630	99.35%	Yes	
3. Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities	23	79.31%	5145	90.79%		No
4. Referred to Employment	4	13.79%	295	5.21%	Yes	
5. Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance	0	0.00%	5	0.09%		No
6. Referred to Federal Training	8	27.59%	355	6.26%	Yes	
7. Referred to Other Federal /State Assistance	2	6.90%	95	1.68%	Yes	
8. Received Individualized Career Service	9	31.03%	2278	40.20%		No
					5	3

Minimum Service Level Indicators								
Indicator Name	MSFW's			Non-MSFW's			Level Met	
	Den	Num	Rate	Den	Num	Rate	Yes	No
Individuals Placed in a Job (as defined in "Employment Rate 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/23 - 06/30/24)	46	30	65.217%	5175	3394	65.585%		No
Median Earnings of Individuals in Unsubsidized Employment (as defined in "Median Earnings 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/23 - 06/30/24)	30	\$8,143.55	NA	3394	\$6,708.56	NA	Yes	
Individuals Placed Long term in Non-agricultural Jobs (as defined in "Retention with the same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Qtr after Exit" for whom a non-agricultural industry is reported (Cohort Period: 01/01/23 - 12/31/23)	21	9	42.857%	3720	2310	62.097%		No
							1	2

Program Year 2024 (07/01/23 – 06/30/24)

MSFW Service Level Indicators Report

PURL File Type: PURL by Program
State: South Dakota
Report Period: 4th Quarter 2023
Quarter Type: Rolling 4 Quarters
Report Run Time: 11/04/2025 8:02:12 AM

Equity Ratio Indicators (Cohort Period: 07/01/23 - 06/30/24)						
Indicator Name	MSFW's		Non-MSFW's		Equity	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Yes	No
Total Participants	51	100.00%	5866	100.00%		
1. Received Basic Career Services (Staff-Assisted)	51	100.00%	5866	100.00%	Yes	
2. Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services	51	100.00%	5804	98.94%	Yes	
3. Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities	40	78.43%	5203	88.70%		No
4. Referred to Employment	8	15.69%	654	11.15%	Yes	
5. Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance	0	0.00%	21	0.36%		No
6. Referred to Federal Training	8	15.69%	677	9.84%	Yes	
7. Referred to Other Federal /State Assistance	2	3.92%	132	2.25%	Yes	
8. Received Individualized Career Service	17	33.33%	2306	39.31%		No
					5	3

Minimum Service Level Indicators								
Indicator Name	MSFW's			Non-MSFW's			Level Met	
	Den	Num	Rate	Den	Num	Rate	Yes	No
Individuals Placed in a Job (as defined in "Employment Rate 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/22 - 06/30/23)	31	18	58.065%	5003	3511	70.178%		No
Median Earnings of Individuals in Unsubsidized Employment (as defined in "Median Earnings 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/22 - 06/30/23)	18	\$6,392.35	NA	3511	\$6,980.28	NA		No
Individuals Placed Long term in Non-agricultural Jobs (as defined in "Retention with the same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Qtr after Exit" for whom a non-agricultural industry is reported (Cohort Period: 01/01/22 - 12/31/22)	16	4	25.00%	3091	1898	61.404%		No
							0	3

Program Year 2023 (07/01/22 – 06/30/23)

MSFW Service Level Indicators Report

PURL File Type: PURL by Program

State: South Dakota

Report Period: 4th Quarter 2022

Quarter Type: Rolling 4 Quarters

Report Run Time: 11/04/2025 8:03:21 AM

Equity Ratio Indicators (Cohort Period: 07/01/22 - 06/30/23)							
Indicator Name	MSFW's		Non-MSFW's		Equity		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Yes	No	
Total Participants	39	100.00%	6013	100.00%			
1. Received Basic Career Services (Staff-Assisted)	39	100.00%	6011	99.97%	Yes		
2. Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services	39	100.00%	5980	99.45%	Yes		
3. Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities	31	79.49%	5125	85.23%		No	
4. Referred to Employment	6	15.38%	781	12.99%	Yes		
5. Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance	0	0.00%	5	0.08%		No	
6. Referred to Federal Training	10	25.64%	464	7.72%	Yes		
7. Referred to Other Federal /State Assistance	1	2.56%	194	3.23%		No	
8. Received Individualized Career Service	22	56.41%	3407	56.66%		No	
					4	4	
Minimum Service Level Indicators							
Indicator Name	MSFW's			Non-MSFW's			Level Met
	Den	Num	Rate	Den	Num	Rate	Yes No
Individuals Placed in a Job (as defined in "Employment Rate 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/21 - 06/30/22)	24	16	66.667%	4230	2957	69.905%	No
Median Earnings of Individuals in Unsubsidized Employment (as defined in "Median Earnings 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/21 - 06/30/22)	16	\$5,878.93	NA	2957	\$6,282.44	NA	No
Individuals Placed Long term in Non-agricultural Jobs (as defined in "Retention with the same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Qtr after Exit " for whom a non-agricultural industry is reported (Cohort Period: 01/01/21 - 12/31/21)	13	6	46.154%	2493	1559	62.535%	No
						0	3

Program Year 2022 (07/01/21 – 06/30/22)

MSFW Service Level Indicators Report

PIRL File Type: PIRL by Program
 State Region: State Region 1
 Region/LWDB : South Dakota
 State: South Dakota
 Report Period: 4th Quarter 2021
 Quarter Type: Rolling 4 Quarters
 Report Run Time: 11/04/2025 8:04:29 AM

Equity Ratio Indicators (Cohort Period: 07/01/21 - 06/30/22)						
Indicator Name	MSFW's		Non-MSFW's		Equity	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Yes	No
Total Participants	26	100.00%	4980	100.00%		
1. Received Basic Career Services (Staff-Assisted)	26	100.00%	4980	100.00%	Yes	
2. Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services	26	100.00%	4938	99.16%	Yes	
3. Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities	21	80.77%	4182	83.98%		No
4. Referred to Employment	2	7.69%	851	17.09%		No
5. Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	Yes	
6. Referred to Federal Training	6	23.08%	432	8.67%	Yes	
7. Referred to Other Federal/State Assistance	0	0.00%	187	3.76%		No
8. Received Individualized Career Service	13	50.00%	2673	53.67%		No
					4	4

Minimum Service Level Indicators								
Indicator Name	MSFW's			Non-MSFW's			Level Met	
	Den	Num	Rate	Den	Num	Rate	Yes	No
Individuals Placed in a Job (as defined in "Employment Rate 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/20 - 06/30/21)	23	14	60.87%	2717	1868	68.752%		No
Median Earnings of Individuals in Unsubsidized Employment (as defined in "Median Earnings 2nd Qtr After Exit") (Cohort Period: 07/01/20 - 06/30/21)	14	\$4,113.49	NA	1868	\$5,702.28	NA		No
Individuals Placed Long term in Non-agricultural Jobs (as defined in "Retention with the same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Qtr after Exit" for whom a non-agricultural industry is reported (Cohort Period: 01/01/20 - 12/31/20)	9	6	66.667%	2229	1396	62.629%	Yes	
							1	2

The above reports show DLR has consistently met ERI indicator 1. Received Basic Career Services (staff-assisted), indicator 2. Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services, and indicator 6. Referred to Federal training. DLR also met Indicator 4. Referred to Employment and indicator 7. Referred to Other Federal/State Assistance for the last two program years. However, there are three indicators DLR did not consistently meet each program year, including indicator 3. Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities, for indicator 5. Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance, and indicator 8. To help improve the results of the ERI indicators, DLR will continue to provide MSFW training to SWA staff.

(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.

A significant part of the last AOP was improving DLR's outreach efforts, continuing our strong relationship with the NFJP partner, ensuring our staff are knowledgeable of the MSFW requirements, and improving our equity ratio indicators.

As indicated in the above sections, all these objectives were achieved in program year 2025.

(E) **State Monitor Advocate.** The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

South Dakota's State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3));
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;
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
4.	SWA officials: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
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).

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM

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)).*

South Dakota's Title II Program, as mandated in section 102 of WIOA, formally adopted a validated set of standards for its delivery of AEFLA instruction, activities, and services on July 01, 2016. In preparation for this required adoption of a standards-based model, a contingent of five South Dakotans attended the April 2014 iteration of the OCTAE-supported College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education's Implementation Institute. During PY2013, the South Dakota Title II program and Technology & Innovation in Education delivered a two-part training on CCRSAE with a specific focus on "unpacking" standards and delving into Webb's Depth of Knowledge. (This standards-based Special Project was supported with *State Leadership* funds.)

Additionally, during PY2015, the State collaborated with LINCS to provide College and Career Readiness training opportunities in both English Language Arts and Mathematics; this professional development included face-to-face and online interactions. DOE adopted the Common Core Standards in 2010 for both English Language Arts and Mathematics. During the 2014 Legislative Session, Governor Dugaard penned an open letter in support of the Common Core Standards.

The Title II program also recalibrated its instruction and activities to align with the GED® 2014 Series—and subsequently the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. In July 2017, at Title II's annual professional development statewide conference, Jane Roy presented two sessions: 1) Preparing Adult English Language Learners for the Workforce: Models and Resources and 2) Introduction to the English Language Proficiency Standards. The aforementioned seems particularly relevant given Jane Roy served as a national Panel Member for the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education.

In PY2020, South Dakota's WIOA Title II Program supported a statewide team that participated in Cohort II of OCTAE's Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) initiative. The TSTM lesson plans' inclusion of Standards Addressed [section] is proving a key component of the template. The ongoing efforts to support TSTM make the Content Standards more accessible for Professional Development, local administrators, and instructors alike. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this inclusion seems to more meaningfully operationalize Content Standards within classroom settings, particularly through the lens of contextualized skill-development.

- (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.*

Under WIOA, Adult Education and Literacy Activities are defined as “programs, activities, and services that include 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” (§203.2). Therefore, as it was in the most recent grant competition, it remains South Dakota’s intent to consider each of these federally defined activities as potentially allowable and fundable under WIOA Title II. Therefore, during South Dakota’s next WIOA Title II Request for Proposals [tentatively planned for Spring 2026], the agency will consider potentially funding any and all of the allowable activities under AEFLA.

South Dakota maintains the prerogative to entertain any viable proposal that seeks to deliver allowable activities, provided it includes a compelling Statement of Need. Depending upon the merit of applications received, the State, in conjunction with the Workforce Development Council, considers alignment and applicability of proposed Title II instruction and services with the broader statewide goals and priorities [as articulated in this State Plan]. Additionally, South Dakota’s Workforce Development Council continues to prioritize WIOA Title II’s emphases on literacy, adult education, English language acquisition, and workplace adult education and literacy activities.

WIOA Title II partners [to varying degrees] with Title I, III, and IV; the State seeks to increase the levels/numbers of co-enrolled participants across core programs throughout the grant-cycle. Improved collaboration may be achieved through deliberate, articulated coordination amongst the core programs. (Of course, federal memoranda clarifying or reinforcing WIOA’s Common Measures are always welcome and well received.) All eligible providers are required to detail in their application for funds their previous, current, and/or potential communication, coordination, and collaboration with their area One-Stop System (i.e., American Job Center).

The AEFLA program ideally seeks to support the delivery of contextualized learning while partnering with other Core WIOA Programs for assistance with job shadowing, job coaching, work experiences, Job Search Workshops, and on-the-job training opportunities. Registered Apprenticeships are also an in-demand opportunity for some job-seekers. Managed worksites, soft-skills training, stackable credentials, occupational skills training with workplace-literacy instruction, work-readiness certification (through ACT’s National Career Readiness Certificate® program), and GED® Testing preparation all serve the agency’s [and WIOA’s] priorities of assisting South Dakota residents toward literacy, numeracy, employability, civic engagement, familial responsibility, and self-sufficiency. The suite of Title III services will continue to be available for all job-seekers, regardless of the participant’s point of access.

Beyond efforts to increase the number of co-enrolled Title II students with other WIOA Core Programs, Title II seeks to reinforce Work Readiness skills in the classroom across ESL, ABE, and ASE programming; this reinforcement consists of delivering relevant professional development, grounding the curricula in College and Career Readiness Standards, highlighting promising practices, and promoting partnerships within the Agency’s capacity. It should be noted, too, that DLR Core Programs (Titles I – III) and the AEFLA Subrecipients have made noteworthy progress with identifying co-

enrollments, utilizing data-sharing dashboards, reinforcing accuracy, assuring data security, and improving tandem case management.

Distance Education, as well as Digital Literacy, will continue to prove prominent throughout the current grant cycle as the intersection of educational and career advancement. Similarly, Family Literacy will likely always have some programmatic emphasis, especially with Title II's adult learners navigating their children's K-12 education [portals], as well as their own Digital Access/Safety and Job Searches.

The following definitions (WIOA Section 203) provide specific detail on the scope of Title II instruction, activities, and services. Each of these allowable activities will be considered for AEFLA funding during the agency's next WIOA Title II grant competition.

- **Adult Education** means academic instruction and education services below the post-secondary 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 post-secondary education and training; and
 - obtain employment.
- **Literacy** means an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.
- **Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities** means adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.
- **Family Literacy Activities** means activities that are of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and that better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:
 - Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for post-secondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency.
 - Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children.
 - 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.
 - An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.
- **English Language Acquisition Program** means 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 attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment.
- **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education** means education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enable such adults 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. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and workforce training.
- **Workforce Preparation Activities** means 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 post-secondary education or training, or employment.

- ***Integrated Education and Training*** means 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.

To assure Direct and Equitable Access [and same-process protocol], DLR announces the availability of funds on its organizational website, within South Dakota's procurement portal, through Public Notice in major newspapers, and through direct emails. Such emails are sent to current local program providers, networks of community partners, and any entities that expressed interest during the previous grant cycle(s). All Applicants receive the same instructions and information prior to submission; additionally, all eligible proposals are reviewed and scored in a consistent manner. All relevant materials are also posted on DLR's WIOA Sub-Recipient webpage, including the *Scoring Rubric* and the *Response to Written Inquiries*.

The agency is responsible for determining whether an Applicant is deemed an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness; therefore, as part of its grant competition, each Applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy. This effectiveness must be demonstrated in the following content domains: Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition. An Applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

For past effectiveness, incumbent providers submit recent years' NRS Tables 4, 4A, and 5, as documentation for the *Request for Proposal*; for new entities, the agency requires evidence detailing how the Applicant has served eligible basic-skills deficient adults, its success and effectiveness in achieving outcomes in the identified domains of Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition [in whatever format the Applicant uses in the formal rendering of such information for its stakeholders]. DLR will determine an Applicant's eligibility based on the data submitted to demonstrate effectiveness. If an Applicant can provide the requested data, and those figures average at least 50% of the agency's statewide/aggregate figures in the respective [and relevant] categories, the application will be further reviewed, scored, and considered for funding. However, applications that do not result in a determination that the Applicant is affiliated with an organization of demonstrated effectiveness will not be considered for funding.

As to the eligible provider's application, the requisite components are detailed in the Request for Proposal; these requirements solicit details regarding the Applicant's proposed multiyear services, delivery-model(s), partnerships, workforce-alignment, performance capabilities, One-Stop obligations, Section 427 GEPA Statement on student-access, and responses to the 13 federal considerations. Furthermore, the initial risk assessment requests that Applicants disclose any potential conflicts of interest, list their staff and respective qualifications, submit local policies across 10 categories, provide audit reports for previous years, detail their organization (property, procurement, processes/methodology), and indicate their IRS 990 status.

Unless otherwise negotiated with DLR (Special Rule detailed in WIOA §233), not less than 95% of the federal AEFLA funds awarded to successful Applicants shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities. The remaining amount, not to exceed 5%, shall be used for planning, administration (including the performance requirements of WIOA §116), professional development, service-alignment with the WIOA State Plan (such as concurrent enrollment with Title I), and One-Stop partner responsibilities.

Moreover, to meet the statutorily required review-processes of Workforce Boards, the Adult Education and Literacy Program will continue to afford South Dakota's single-area Workforce Development Council the opportunity to make recommendations to DLR to promote alignment with this WIOA State Plan; additionally, DLR must consider the results of the review by the Workforce Development Council in determining the extent to which the application addresses the required considerations in WIOA Section 231 and CFR 463.20.

The agency, to fund eligible providers for the establishment or operation of programs, used the 13 federal considerations [as detailed in WIOA Section 231] to evaluate and rank the applicants in the 2022 grant competition. South Dakota's WIOA Title II Program emphasized **Service Need and Provider Capacity** (i.e., AEFLA's Considerations I, II, and XIII) and **Quality and Effectiveness** (Considerations III, V, VI, and IX). Per 34 CFR Section 463 Subpart C, the agency shall continue to use the 13 federal considerations for determining how it awards future grants to eligible AEFLA providers.

(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.

South Dakota, under the direct and equitable access process requirements, held its most recent AEFLA grant competition in spring 2022. And to assure Direct and Equitable Access [and same-process protocol], DLR announces the availability of funds on its organizational website, within South Dakota's procurement portal, through Public Notice in major newspapers, and through direct emails. Such emails are sent to current local program providers, networks of community partners, and any entities which expressed interest during the previous grant cycle(s). All Applicants receive the same instructions and information prior to submission; additionally, all eligible proposals are reviewed and scored in a consistent manner. All relevant materials are also posted on DLR's WIOA Sub-Recipient webpage, including the *Scoring Rubric* and the *Response to Written Inquiries*.

The agency is responsible for determining whether an Applicant is deemed an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness; therefore, as part of its grant competition, each Applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy. This effectiveness must be demonstrated in the following content domains: Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition. An Applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, as well as transition to post-secondary education and training.

For past effectiveness, incumbent providers submit recent years' NRS Tables 4, 4A, and 5 as documentation for the *Request for Proposal*; for new entities, the agency requires evidence detailing how the Applicant has served eligible basic-skills deficient adults, its success and effectiveness in achieving outcomes in the identified domains of Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition [in whatever format the Applicant uses in the formal rendering of such information for its stakeholders]. DLR will determine an Applicant's eligibility based on the data submitted to demonstrate effectiveness. If an Applicant can provide the requested data, and those figures average at least 50% of the agency's statewide/aggregate figures in the respective [and relevant] categories, the application will be further reviewed, scored, and considered for funding. However, applications that do not result in a determination that the Applicant is affiliated with an organization of demonstrated effectiveness will not be considered for funding.

As to the eligible provider's application, the requisite components are detailed in the Request for Proposal; these requirements solicit details regarding the Applicant's proposed multiyear services, delivery-model(s), partnerships, workforce-alignment, performance capabilities, One-Stop obligations, Section 427 GEPA Statement on student-access, and responses to the 13 federal considerations. Furthermore, the initial risk assessment requests Applicants to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, list their staff and respective qualifications, submit local policies across ten categories, provide audit reports for previous years, detail their organization (property, procurement, processes/methodology), and denote their IRS 990 status.

Unless otherwise negotiated with DLR (Special Rule detailed in WIOA §233), not less than 95% of the federal AEFLA funds awarded to successful Applicants shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities. The remaining amount, not to exceed 5%, shall be used for planning, administration (including the performance requirements of WIOA §116), professional development, service-alignment with the WIOA State Plan (such as concurrent enrollment with Title I), and One-Stop partner responsibilities.

Moreover, to meet the statutorily required review-processes of Workforce Boards, the Adult Education and Literacy Program will continue to afford South Dakota's single-area Workforce Development Council the opportunity to make recommendations to DLR to promote alignment with this WIOA State Plan; additionally, DLR must consider the results of the review by the Workforce Development Council in determining the extent to which the application addresses the required considerations in WIOA Section 231 and CFR 463.20.

The agency, to fund eligible providers for the establishment or operation of programs, used the 13 federal considerations [as detailed in WIOA Section 231] to evaluate and rank the applicants in the 2022 grant competition. South Dakota's WIOA Title II Program emphasized *Service Need and Provider Capacity* (i.e., AEFLA's Considerations I, II, and XIII) and *Quality and Effectiveness* (Considerations III, V, VI, and IX). Per 34 CFR Section 463 Subpart C, the agency shall continue to use the 13 federal considerations for determining how it awards future grants to eligible AEFLA providers.

The Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individualized programming (as funded under §225) was competed using the same application processes used for Section 231 funds. Any applications for full or partial funding under Section 225 were evaluated using the same scoring criteria as all other applications (i.e., §225, 231, or 243). As noted in the previous section of this State Plan, the agency will conduct its forthcoming grant competition (Spring 2026) in full accordance with 34 CFR Section 463 Subpart C; furthermore, the agency's 2026 competition will compete the Section 231, 225, and 243 funds in the very same manner.

For South Dakota's forthcoming AEFLA competition, the State shall consider the following academic programs as both allowable and prioritized for Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals:

- Adult education and literacy activities;

- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

For the anticipated 2026 grant competition, the State also reserves the right to consider these [federally allowable] academic programs for Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals as allowable ancillary programming:

- Special education;
- Secondary school credit; and
- Concurrent enrollment.

The incarcerated population in South Dakota is considered a major target group for adult education services; this target group constitutes a significant portion of the difficult-to-serve adult population. The objective of correctional education programs is to provide educational and job training services, linked to the goal of developing productive and responsible members of society. The South Dakota Department of Corrections (DOC) has placed a high priority on achieving the GED® credential. Incarcerated adults generally must have their GED® credential before becoming eligible for parole. Academic programs for basic education with special emphasis on literacy and numeracy offer these adults an increased chance to attain the skills to integrate successfully into society.

From funds made available under section 225 for a fiscal year, each eligible agency shall carry out corrections education or education for other institutionalized individuals, including academic programs. Funds shall be used for the cost of educational programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions and for other institutionalized individuals, including academic program activities outlined heretofore in this Unified Plan. The activities to be addressed within correctional education are

- Preparing students to receive a high school diploma equivalency;
- Preparing students to make a successful transition to the community;
- Preparing students for gainful employment;
- Promoting teacher professionalism and growth;
- Developing and implementing innovative approaches to improving the basic skills of students; and
- Expanding the use of technology to enhance instruction.

Correctional institutions described in their grant applications how they will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participating in the program. Regarding types of institutional settings, a correctional institution could include any of the following:

- Prison
- Jail
- Reformatory
- Work farm
- Detention center
- Halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders

Currently, DOC manages the State Prison Systems, and adult education programs are made available to inmates. These programs include educational services in adult basic education, secondary education, and GED® preparation. Adult education programs may serve local and county correctional facilities in their area. Inmates are usually housed for

varying periods of time, and their needs are best determined at the local level. Other facilities, such as State Institutions, may also apply to operate adult education programs within their facilities or in collaboration with community-based organizations. Depending upon the merit of applications received, the State will, in conjunction with the Workforce Development Council, consider alignment and applicability of proposed Title II instruction and services with the broader statewide goals and priorities [as articulated in this State Plan].

(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.

Applicants' eligibility is noted in Section 1.2, while Demonstrated Effectiveness is defined in Section 3.2 of the RFP. And of course, Local Administrative Costs topics are addressed in the RFP's Section 4.7.

To assure Direct and Equitable Access [and same-process protocol], DLR announces the availability of funds on its organizational website, within South Dakota's procurement portal, through Public Notice in major newspapers, and through direct emails. Such emails are sent to current local program providers, networks of community partners, and any entities which expressed interest during the previous grant cycle(s). All Applicants receive the same instructions and information prior to submission; additionally, all eligible proposals are reviewed and scored in a consistent manner. All relevant materials are also posted on DLR's WIOA [Sub-Recipient webpage](#), including the *Scoring Rubric* and the *Response to Written Inquiries*.

The agency is responsible for determining whether an Applicant is deemed an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness; therefore, as part of its grant competition, each Applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy. This effectiveness must be demonstrated in the following content domains: Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition. An Applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, as well as transition to post-secondary education and training.

For past effectiveness, incumbent providers submit recent years' NRS Tables 4, 4A, and 5 as documentation for the *Request for Proposal*; for new entities, the agency requires evidence detailing how the Applicant has served eligible basic-skills deficient adults, its success and effectiveness in achieving outcomes in the identified domains of Reading, Writing, Math, and English Language Acquisition [in whatever format the Applicant uses in the formal rendering of such information for its stakeholders]. DLR will determine an Applicant's eligibility based on the data submitted for demonstrated effectiveness. If an Applicant can provide the requested data, and those figures average at least 50% of

the agency's statewide/aggregate figures in the respective [and relevant] categories, the application will be further reviewed, scored, and considered for funding. However, applications that do not result in a determination that the Applicant is affiliated with an organization of demonstrated effectiveness will not be considered for funding.

As to the eligible provider's application, the requisite components are detailed in the Request for Proposal; these requirements solicit details regarding the Applicant's proposed multiyear services, delivery-model(s), partnerships, workforce-alignment, performance capabilities, One-Stop obligations, Section 427 GEPA Statement on student-access, and responses to the 13 federal considerations. Furthermore, the initial risk assessment requests that Applicants disclose any potential conflicts of interest, list their staff and respective qualifications, submit local policies across 10 categories, provide audit reports for previous years, detail their organization (property, procurement, processes/methodology), and indicate their IRS 990 status.

Unless otherwise negotiated with DLR (Special Rule detailed in WIOA §233), not less than 95% of the federal AEFLA funds awarded to successful Applicants shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities. The remaining amount, not to exceed 5%, shall be used for planning, administration (including the performance requirements of WIOA §116), professional development, service-alignment with the WIOA State Plan (such as concurrent enrollment with Title I), and One-Stop partner responsibilities.

Moreover, to meet the statutorily required review-processes of Workforce Boards, the Adult Education and Literacy Program will continue to afford South Dakota's single-area Workforce Development Council the opportunity to make recommendations to DLR to promote alignment with this WIOA State Plan; additionally, DLR must consider the results of the review by the Workforce Development Council in determining the extent to which the application addresses the required considerations in WIOA Section 231 and CFR 463.20.

The agency used the 13 federal considerations [as detailed in WIOA Section 231] to evaluate and rank applicants in the most recent 2022 grant competition for funding eligible providers for the establishment or operation of programs. South Dakota's WIOA Title II Program emphasized *Service Need and Provider Capacity* (i.e., AEFLA's Considerations I, II, and XIII) and *Quality and Effectiveness* (Considerations III, V, VI, and IX). Per 34 CFR Section 463 Subpart C, the agency shall continue to use the 13 federal considerations for determining how it awards future grants to eligible AEFLA providers.

The State shall adopt the federal determinations regarding definitions and destinations. The term "integrated English literacy and civics education" means education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enable such adults 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. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English Language Acquisition (ELA) and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training.

A fundable IELCE Program must be designed to enable adults 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 will also include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation. These aforementioned activities must be provided in combination with integrated education and training activities; additionally, these programs funded under §243 must be designed to 1) prepare English language learners for, and place in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and 2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to implement the activities of the program.

The state's refugee-resettlement entity, as an AEFLA sub-recipient, continues to deliver the sole IELCE programming in South Dakota. Students enroll in Literacy and Oracy Classes, Citizenship Test Preparation, as well as Digital Literacy instruction. Eventually, some of these students are co-enrolled in TANF or Title I Workforce Training, while a number of these non-native speakers are concurrently enrolled in the entity's Skills That Employ People (STEP) classes; STEP classes are specific job-sector training and general workforce preparation in conjunction with Job Developers from the resettlement agency and Employment Specialists from the One-Stop.

These STEP Classes have previously been offered to provide sector-specific Workforce Training in areas such as Commercial Housekeeping, Retail Customer Service, Landscaping & Gardening, Manufacturing Safety, Childcare Training, Food Service & Safety, and Introduction to Patient Care. These intensive, two-week [to four-week] classes have focused on in-demand occupations. Additional classes and curriculum enhancements are also developed as needed to meet local workforce needs.

Workforce Training activities are offered through sector-specific training courses across in-demand occupations and industries. ELA participants are invited to co-enroll in these STEP classes; the STEP classes include basic skills instruction in the context of sector-specific Workforce Training and use occupationally relevant instructional materials developed in partnership and collaboration with local employers. STEP-class participants are also enrolled in weekly Workforce Preparation classes/workshops such as Job Interviewing, Resume Writing, and Online Job Applications.

The SD IELCE program develops learners' basic skills (reading and writing, speaking and listening, and numeracy) leading to self-sufficiency and success in community life, employment, further education/training, citizenship, and civic participation. This program integrates civics/citizenship activities into existing English language classes from the Beginning Literacy level to the Advanced level, as well as provides instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, including American history and American systems of government. Plus, the English Language Acquisition (ELA) programming is delivered concurrently and contextually with Integrated Education and Training activities [including Workforce Preparation and Workforce Training].

Workforce Preparation activities are available through the entity's monthly, short-term, managed-enrollment classes in employability skills and digital literacy, embedded in ELA instruction through implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), and incorporated in IET topical units focused on specific transitional skills.

The IELCE program delivers Integrated Education and Training activities through the provision of English Language Acquisition concurrently and contextually with Workforce Preparation Activities (also known as transition skills), which include basic academics, critical thinking, digital literacy, self-management, resource utilization, teamwork, and organizational systems. The program integrates transition skills into English language classes in conjunction with the State ESL Competency Checklists and CCRS across all levels of English language instruction [as appropriate, respectively, to Student Performance Levels].

The IELCE program provides short-term, managed-enrollment Workforce Preparation classes, even during the evening; these classes include Integrated Digital Literacy, Basic Computer Skills, Keyboarding, English for Driving, Job Interviews, Math & American Measurements, Resume Writing, and Job Applications.

The IELCE program delivers Integrated Education and Training activities through the provision of English Language Acquisition concurrently and contextually with Workforce Training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, integrated with the local workforce development system and its functions to implement program activities. Instructors have developed and delivered IET units on Workforce Training; these units (called Workplace English for Specific Occupations) highlight in-demand industries and occupations aligned with current employer needs. Moreover, one

extensive IET unit, entitled Workplace Communication for Customer Service Careers, was developed to provide basic skills in the context of Workforce Training.

(e) State Leadership. *Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.*

The Agency shall use not more than 12.5% of funds made available under the Act for State Leadership Activities for the following *required* adult education and literacy activities:

- 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 State Plan, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.
- 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.
- The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including
 - 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;
 - 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.
- 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.

For alignment efforts, WIOA Title II will expend State Leadership funds to collaborate with other core programs and partner agencies to align and coordinate services for program participants. State Leadership funds will also be expended to build programmatic capacity by guiding and reinforcing Referrals, Services, and Case Management between AEFLA providers and their respective Local One-Stop(s). These protocols (e.g., electronic referral forms, SharePoint dashboards, Student Progress Reports) better guide the development of career pathways through joint education and employment plans.

For Professional Development, State Leadership funds will continue to support multiple cohorts of the State's Instructor Development Program(s). These Adult Basic/Secondary and English Language teacher trainings serve as an induction for new instructors and a refresher for senior staff; the structure of these IDPs incorporates both mentorship and reflection components. The participants review the assessment protocol, instructional methodologies, program structures, the National Reporting System, the College and Career Readiness Standards, lesson planning, serving individuals with disabilities, and persistence-related topics.

In addition to supporting the State's monthly archived AEFLA database training, State Leadership funds will continue to support monthly AEFLA Administrator Meetings. These standing meetings reinforce Title II's commitment to Data Quality and WIOA Alignment. State Leadership funds also support two other standing [monthly] meetings: the

Professional Development Team Meeting and the State's Third Thursday Trainings (T³). The PD Team is comprised of the State Director of Adult Education and three local AEFLA administrators, respectively representing Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and English Language Acquisition.

T³ is the program's monthly forum, explicitly for instructors and often led by instructors; these webinars are recorded and archived on the South Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning's [website](#). Job Corps and Tribal Colleges are also welcome to attend these monthly T³ offerings. This series also serves as one of the means to disseminate information about models and/or promising and proven practices across the state.

To meet the required provisions for technical assistance, the agency often supports federally sponsored programs such as Student Achievement in Reading, Adult Numeracy Instruction, Teaching Skills That Matter, and content from NRS Regional Training (e.g., Data Flow, Journey to Recruitment/Retention materials). As eligible providers in the One-Stop, we occasionally meet with other Core Program staff during our Monthly AEFLA Administrator Meetings to coordinate training services and delivery models. WIOA Title II also participates in the annual WIOA Symposium along with the other statewide WIOA Core Programs and Required Partners. Moreover, technology training is both explicitly and implicitly embedded in our LACES training, Microsoft Teams and Zoom meetings, virtual Third Thursday forums, sundry conferences, and ongoing SharePoint utilization.

As to the monitoring and evaluation of AEFLA activities, the agency employs a suite of approaches that include formal subrecipient monitoring, ensuring each provider receives a full on-site review at least once during a four-year grant cycle. Hence, the agency generally conducts one or two onsite AEFLA Monitors each program year; these monitors are comprised of both fiscal and programmatic elements. The Subrecipient Monitor includes a formal Notice Letter, fiscal worksheets to be completed, a copy of AEFLA's *Local Monitoring Guide*, and a timeline of expectations. A randomized list of AEFLA students is generated to spot-check for accuracy and data-validation between each hardcopy file and its respective electronic record in the LACES database.

Because these subrecipient monitors review both financial and instructional aspects of programming, the subsequent Monitor Report features two sections: Programming and Fiscal. Within the report, *Promising Practices* are often noted. *Areas of Concern* are noted with Recommended Actions, and Required Actions are detailed with expected provider follow-up and documentation. The agency articulates much of the protocol in [guidance](#).

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

The Agency shall use not more than 12.5% of funds made available under the Act for State Leadership Activities for one or more of the following *permissible* adult education and literacy activities:

- The support of State or regional networks of literacy resource centers.
- The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.
- Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults.
- Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.
- 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.

- The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to post-secondary education, including linkages with post-secondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.
- Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers.
- Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.
- Identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards.
- Developing and piloting strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.
- 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.
- Outreach to instructors, students, and employers.
- Other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of this title.

As permissible activities, South Dakota leadership monies will continue to fund the program's Management Information System licenses, technical support, data analytics, and monthly database training; evidence-based reading and numeracy instruction; attendance at virtual/onsite training for the National Reporting System; assessment-refreshers and trainings; South Dakota's Adult Education Credentials [for Teacher Quality and Effectiveness; partnership-outreach with the South Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning; as well as membership in the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE).

(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.*

To assess the quality of AEFLA instructional activities, South Dakota's Adult Education and Literacy Program leverages its continuous program monitoring (e.g., desk monitoring, onsite visits, quarterly reports, technical-assistance calls, monthly meetings, and topical webinars) to inform programmatic needs and areas for improvement. Additionally, a robust Management Information System affords the agency the ability to delve into WIOA Title II data at the statewide, provider-wide, local, and even classroom levels.

The assessment of program quality includes ongoing review of the following metrics:

- Funding Amount(s)
- Number of Students—Reportables and Participants
- Cost Per Participant
- Measurable Skill Gains [percentages and historical totals]
- Average Hours Per Student
- Average Hours for Students with Post-Tests
- Total Hours of Classroom Instruction
- Post-Testing Rate
- Number and percentage of Entered Employment
- Number and percentage of Retained Employment
- Number and percentage of Earned High School Equivalencies
- Number and percentage of Entered Job Training or Post-secondary Education
- Number and percentage of Intermediate Adult Basic Learners
- Number and percentage of English Language Learners

- Accuracy between the student’s hardcopy file and the student’s information housed in MIS
 - Data Validation
- Validity and reliability of pre-test and post-test assessments

This student-management system allows each local provider to maintain a high-quality information system capable of reporting participant outcomes and monitoring program performance against the eligible agency’s performance measures. DLR will require each approved program to update student records monthly and to submit quarterly data reports and an End-of-Year Narrative.

The State will monitor and analyze data for each program, as well as provide support and feedback; this feedback includes the Data Analytics Worksheets developed by the MIS vendor to assist providers with Participants, Reportables, Measurable Skill Gains, Post-Tests, and Enrollment details. Student performance measures will also be monitored regularly to ensure continuous improvement at the local level. The State office will work with its sub-grantee providers and the local DLR offices to address the provision of appropriate referrals for individuals eligible for other support services to affect higher rates of student persistence, student achievement, program completion, and successful transitions to the workforce, post-secondary education, or job training. If Technical Assistance does not rectify or ameliorate the situation, an Action Plan will be drafted between the Agency and the Provider explicitly detailing the corrective steps and the expected timeline.

Other mechanisms the agency uses for program evaluation and improvement include the Pre-Award Risk Assessments, as detailed in Section 4.3 of the multiyear grant application. This initial risk assessment requests applicants disclose any potential conflicts of interest, list their staff and respective qualifications, submit local policies across 10 categories, provide audit reports for previous years, detail their organization (property, procurement, processes/methodology), denote their IRS 990 status, and more. Thereafter, these items are comprehensively revisited during the subsequent grant cycle's Subrecipient Monitoring. Every grant cycle, each provider undergoes at least one full review of both their fiscal documentation and their programmatic service-delivery.

Therefore, the program monitoring, written evaluations [and verbal feedback] from Professional Development offerings, data analytics [from the agency, PD Team, and MIS], and technical assistance all serve as program evaluation. Moreover, the coordination of service delivery with other WIOA Core Programs and One-Stop Partners also informs program improvement as AEFLA seeks to provide high-quality instruction, avoid service duplication, and afford Title II students access to support services and relevant programming through our partners.

A noteworthy example of the intersection of professional development, technical assistance, program monitoring, and data analytics is South Dakota’s statewide deployment of the [NRS] *Journey to Recruitment* and *Journey to Retention* frameworks/efforts for each local provider’s review of historical data, evaluation of current priorities, and plans for program improvement. Of course, these plans for program improvement are reconciled with Local Program Goals as articulated in each provider’s most recent grant application. Content from the recent NRS Regional Trainings serves as a framework for professional development for teaching staff, MIS training for data specialists, leadership training during AEFLA Administrator Meetings, and local Subrecipient Monitoring.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;

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;
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

The State Plan must include assurances that:

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);
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;
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;
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.
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).

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

Instructions: *In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions. Click here to enter text.*

OMB Control No. 1894-0005 (Exp. 04/30/2020)

South Dakota's WIOA Title II Program shall ensure its Adult Education and Family Literacy Act applicants submit the required description under Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act to the South Dakota DLR. Within a narrative format, each applicant must detail how it intends [as an eligible subrecipient] to maintain equitable access to (and participation in) Adult Education instruction, activities, and services. Based on local circumstances, the applicant may address any of the six types of barriers in the statute that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.

As the Agency responsible for administering Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the South Dakota DLR shall further ensure subrecipients have equitable access to both required and permissible State Leadership activities. With specificity, the program will deliver Professional Development opportunities in multiple modalities and structures (e.g., online, archived, onsite, hybrid, flipped-model, chunking strategies, frequent breaks, kinesthetic approaches, etc.) to better accommodate administrators, instructors, support staff, and Agency staff [with disabilities or age-related infirmities].

It should be noted that Section 427 is not intended to duplicate the requirements of civil rights statutes; moreover, an applicant may use awarded Federal funds to eliminate barriers it identifies.

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's Mission, in part, is to promote fair and equitable employment solutions and sound business practices. At the local level, compliance and student-access are the most highly prioritized facets of Adult Education programming. Whereas the pass-through Agency's WIOA Title II programing directly serves the local AEFLA Subrecipients, in addition to the other WIOA Core Programs and

Required Partners; all other efforts serve the WIOA statute, National Reporting System, and departmental expectations. And all such collaborative efforts ultimately serve some of our state's most vulnerable adult-learners. Therefore, per the Agency's request, DLR's local subrecipients annually agree not to charge any sort of materials fees or student tuition for eligible adults' access to instructional services under AEFLA [and South Dakota's State Match].

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

By removing any financial barriers to *Student Enrollment*, the Agency and its local Adult Education providers can focus their efforts on student progress, persistence, and completion. Perennial barriers to access [and participation/employment] include lack of transportation, rural or geographic isolation, lack of broadband/hardware/digital literacy, health issues, justice-involvement, limited English proficiency, and lack of childcare.

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?

South Dakota's Adult Education and Literacy Program will continue to partner with other WIOA Core Programs (i.e., Workforce Training, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Colleges, Housing, SNAP/TANF) to assist adult learners in their educational program of study, work readiness, language acquisition, naturalization, re-entry services, and self-advocacy for accommodations. In terms of agency and provider-access, it is noted above the program will deliver Professional Development opportunities in multiple modalities and structures (e.g., online, archived, onsite, hybrid, flipped-model, chunking strategies, frequent breaks, kinesthetic approaches, etc.) to better accommodate administrators, instructors, support staff, and Agency staff [with disabilities or age-related infirmities].

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Barriers to participation [and employment] will likely exist for many years to come. Therefore, the Agency's efforts to mitigate structural, linguistic, cultural, geographic, and economic barriers are ongoing. The best means to address the annual efficacy of South Dakota's Adult Education programming would be found in the National Reporting System's State Dashboard.

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

Review the linked document. Where "applicant" is mentioned, that refers to the State eligible agency and "application" refers to the state plan. This element does not apply to local providers for state plan purposes. State eligible agencies are required to maintain local GEPA responses separately from the state plan. The State eligible agency must provide a response to GEPA regarding use of AEFLA State Administration and State Leadership funds in the State Plan.

The purpose of this enclosure is to inform you about the following provision in the Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) that applies to applicants for new grant awards under Department programs. This provision is Section 427 of GEPA, enacted as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law (P.L.) 103-382).

TO WHOM DOES THIS PROVISION APPLY?

*Section 427 of GEPA affects applicants for new grant awards under this program. **ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW AWARDS MUST INCLUDE INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS NEW PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.***

(If this program is a State-formula grant program, a State needs to provide this description only for projects or activities that it carries out with funds reserved for State-level uses. In addition, local school districts or other eligible applicants that apply to the State for funding need to provide this description in their applications to the State for funding. The State would be responsible for ensuring that the school district or other local entity has submitted a sufficient section 427 statement as described below.)

WHAT DOES THIS PROVISION REQUIRE?

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to and participation in its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc., from accessing or participating in the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

Section 427 is not intended to duplicate the requirements of civil rights statutes, but rather to ensure that, in designing their projects, applicants for Federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to fully participate in the project and to achieve high standards. Consistent with program requirements and its approved application, an applicant may use the Federal funds awarded to it to eliminate barriers it identifies.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF HOW AN APPLICANT MIGHT SATISFY THE REQUIREMENT OF THIS PROVISION?

The following examples may help illustrate how an applicant may comply with Section 427.

- (1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.*
- (2) An applicant who proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.*
- (3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls to encourage their enrollment.*
- (4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address the concern of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students*

We recognize that many applicants may already be implementing effective steps to ensure equity of access and participation in their grant programs, and we appreciate your cooperation in responding to the requirements of this provision.

ESTIMATED BURDEN STATEMENT FOR GEPA REQUIREMENTS

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit (Public Law 103-382. 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 Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0005.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs

- a. <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>
2. [Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying](#)
 - a. <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>
3. [SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(required, only if applicable\)](#)
 - a. <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

(a) State Rehabilitation Council. All VR agencies, except those with 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):
No (A) is an independent State commission.

Yes (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/ Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1 st Term	12/2024
Parent Training and Information Center	1 st Term	01/2024
Client Assistance Program	1 st Term	04/2025
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	2 nd Term	01/2024
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1 st Term	01/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	1 st Term	07/2025
Business, Industry, and Labor	1 st Term	01/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	1 st Term	07/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	2 nd Term	01/2024
Disability Advocacy Groups	2 nd Term	07/2024
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1 st Term	01/2024
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	NA	NA
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	1 st Term	07/2023
State Workforce Development Board	2 nd Term	01/2024
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	NA	NA

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 is meeting the requirements of Section 105(b).

In South Dakota, the State Rehabilitation Council is known as the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR). The BVR fulfills the requirements of Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. It includes 15 members—individuals with disabilities, advocates, business leaders, and VR professionals, with a majority being individuals with disabilities not employed by the state VR agency. Meetings are held quarterly, are publicly announced and accessible, and include time for public comment in accordance with open meetings laws.

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 Board provides advice to and works in partnership with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division). The Board plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served. The Board works in partnership with the Division to develop policies, plan activities, evaluate program effectiveness, and carry out other functions related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. The primary focus is to ensure individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services which result in successful employment outcomes.

Each year, the Board and Division solicit nominations from individuals with disabilities and organizations representing individuals with disabilities statewide. Nominations, including those seeking reappointment, are submitted to the Governor for review and appointment.

The Board submitted an annual report to the Governor and RSA regarding the status of the VR program and made it available to the public.

Board Input:

- ✓ Provided recommendations on the selection of the Governor's Awards recipients.
- ✓ Reviewed and analyzed the Client Satisfaction Survey results.
- ✓ Approved financial support for the Governor's Awards Ceremony, NDEAM events, and an educational event to highlight the importance of the ADA and the history of the disability movement.
- ✓ Reviewed and approved changes to the Board's bylaws.
- ✓ Endorsed the Division's Outreach Campaign strategies and final deliverables.
- ✓ Endorsed strategies to increase awareness and access to VR services statewide.
- ✓ Endorsed services, activities, and continued investment to engage youth with disabilities, which assist the VR program in meeting its requirement to allocate 15% of federal funds to the provision of PRE ETS (Project SEARCH, Summer Youth Programs).
- ✓ Provided a copy of the annual report to the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council for it to be shared on their website (<https://www.ncsrc.us/annual-reports>).
- ✓ Reviewed VR performance indicators and case file review findings and supported efforts to explore areas to improve consistency and clarity in service delivery.
- ✓ Engaged in early stages of implementation of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and will continue to collaborate with the Division to analyze findings and integrate them into the State Plan's goals and strategies.

All recommendations by the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services were accepted.

The Board provides ongoing input and feedback to the Division, fostering meaningful dialogue even when formal actions or motions are not recorded in meeting minutes. During the reporting period, the Board received updates and provided input on a range of programs and services. These included: case services, performance measures, the outreach campaign, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), staff training, employer outreach, subminimum wage (Section 511), case file reviews, Project SEARCH, the Ticket to Work Program, post-secondary outcomes (Indicator 14), provider certification testing, the new payroll system for student workers, and business specialist activities. The Board also participated in state plan development, reviewed collaborative efforts, such as the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education, and supported initiatives, such as the Youth Leadership Forum.

The Board and Division also hosted orientation for new members, conducted officer elections, reviewed the agreement to provide staff support to the BVR, and hosted an NDEAM debriefing involving the local community planners, VR staff, BVR, SILC and B/SBVI members.

Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

[text box: List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response]

No recommendations were rejected.

(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:

The South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) contracted with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative to assist with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). This assessment is done every three years, and the most current assessment was completed on November 12, 2025. The CSNA was conducted in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council and partner agencies. The CSNA consisted of reviewing historical and national data; review of consumer satisfaction surveys; surveying staff, providers and businesses; and in-dept interviews with key informants.

The CSNA emphasized the importance of individualized, strength-based approaches that focus on aligning services with client interests rather than assumptions about ability. Both staff and providers highlighted the value of “try-it-and-see” placements, integrated education and employment models, and early exposure to work-based learning to build independence and long-term employment readiness.

Innovative practices identified included:

- Increased use of registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other integrated work-based learning opportunities.
- Stronger inclusion of soft-skill development alongside technical training.
- Expansion of integrated rehabilitation centers capable of serving a broad range of disability needs.
- Use of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and mental-health-focused initiatives to support individuals and rural providers who may lack access to specialized expertise.

These approaches were credited with improving confidence, reducing skill gaps, and helping address broader workforce shortages in South Dakota.

(A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;

The CSNA overwhelmingly identified mental health challenges as the most significant barrier to employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Additional cross-cutting barriers included:

1. Insufficiently trained staff to support individuals with high needs, especially those with significant behavioral challenges.
2. High turnover rates among direct support professionals undermine the continuity of services.
3. Risk aversion from families, schools, and some providers, resulting in fewer real-world employment opportunities.
4. Employer misconceptions and stigma about the capabilities of people with significant disabilities.

The CSNA identified the need for expanded on-site job coaching, more long-term mental health supports, and a standardized statewide job coach training program to increase consistency, quality, and preparedness across agencies and providers.

- (B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

The CSNA noted improvements in outreach but emphasized persistent disparities in access for minority, immigrant, and non-English-speaking communities. Ongoing barriers include:

- Limited awareness of VR services.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- Lack of culturally relevant engagement strategies.
- Rural locations where trust and visibility remain low.

Recommended strategies included:

- Expanding multilingual materials, forms, and digital access points.
- Strengthening partnerships with trusted community organizations, cultural leaders, and rural service hubs.
- Establishing VR “home bases” within community clinics or centers to increase presence and trust.
- Leveraging assistive technology and mobile-friendly tools to support rural and minority populations.

The CSNA stated that while no groups are fully unserved, several remain significantly underserved due to awareness gaps, access limitations, and system navigation challenges. These include:

- Immigrant and non-English-speaking residents.
- Tribal communities in remote or underserved regions.
- Older adults experiencing late-onset vision loss who may not be promptly referred.
- Rural residents with limited transportation or service access.

CSNA also addressed concerns that VR and provider staff are stretched thin, raising questions about capacity to serve all groups effectively without additional staffing and resource support.

- (C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

Cross-agency collaboration was consistently recognized as both critical and in need of strengthening. Positive elements included:

- Monthly partnership meetings and workforce coalitions.

- Existing memoranda of understanding and shared referral processes.
- Increasing willingness among agencies to coordinate on complex cases.

The CSNA identified several opportunities for improvement:

- Increased cross-training to clarify roles and reduce duplication.
- Establishing clearer “guardrails” for which agencies serve specific populations.
- More consistent implementation of collaborative planning for individuals with intellectual or multiple disabilities.
- More actionable, structured coordination among VR, workforce agencies, schools, community partners, and employers.

Populations most likely to benefit from improved coordination include individuals with disabilities who are not the most significant, as well as tribal and immigrant communities facing structural access barriers.

- (D) Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

Youth and Pre Employment Transition Services remain strong across the state. Post school outcomes indicate that many students achieve positive results after high school. Sixty three percent achieved competitive employment and seventy eight percent worked at some point after exit. Twenty six percent enrolled in postsecondary education or training. A majority maintained stable living arrangements, health coverage, and community involvement.

Partners across agencies identified transition services as one of the most significant system gaps. Challenges included:

- Funding restrictions limiting the scope of in-school Pre-ETS services.
- Inconsistent or late introduction of career exploration and independent living skills in schools.
- Limited early work experiences prior to age 18.
- Lack of a consistent statewide framework for Pre-ETS, leading to uneven implementation.
- Underutilization of some transition services due to limited awareness and recruitment challenges.

The CSNA strongly emphasized the need for:

- Earlier intervention, well before high school exit.
- Stronger alignment between VR, schools, and CTE programs.
- Expansion of pre-apprenticeship opportunities for students with disabilities.
- Clearer and more structured state guidance for schools executing transition programming.

- (2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

The CSNA obtained limited feedback on CRP operations but identified growing concerns about sustainability, particularly in rural communities. Shared recommendations included:

- More state support in convening regional CRP-school-employer coalitions to share strategies and address service gaps.
- Development of training pipelines to mitigate staffing shortages.
- Increased cross-training and adoption of community health worker models to reduce reliance on emergency services and support continuity of care.
- Expand access to real-time job coaching and increase investment in the direct support workforce to improve employment sustainability for people with disabilities.
- More trained employment specialists, broader outreach to minority and immigrant communities, and expanded community-based supports to ensure continuity of services.

(c) Goals, Priorities, and Strategies. Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act requires 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 Consumer Services Committee for the State Rehabilitation Council and the VR agency met on 2/25/2023, 3/7/2023, 4/12/2023 and 5/9/2023 to develop the new goals and strategies. The goals and strategies were then presented to the full State Rehabilitation Council on 6/14/2023, where they approved them.

- (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 post-secondary 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.

Goal 1: Implement strategies to increase awareness and access to services/resources.

- Strategy 1.1. Promote an *Employment First* philosophy that *WORK* is the first and preferred option for all individuals, including youth.
- Strategy 1.2. Expand efforts to ensure the state's workforce represents the most advanced, diverse, skilled, and future-ready workers.
- Strategy 1.3. Generate concentrated efforts to increase South Dakotans' knowledge and understanding of VR services and ensure that individuals with disabilities can access services through consumer-friendly processes.
- Strategy 1.4. Increase dissemination of information to potential clients on how to access or connect with VR services (e.g., website, other VR-related information).
- Strategy 1.5. Provide VR-related materials and/or information in other languages and make it available as needs are identified.
- Strategy 1.6. Explore and partner with organizations/agencies to broaden outreach efforts to reach underserved minority groups, e.g., Oyate' Circle and Multi-Cultural Center.

Goal 2. Identify and support students and youth with disabilities with making informed choices for successful daily living and participation in education/training leading to career pathways through the provision of individualized services.

- Strategy 2.1. Continue to invest resources in developing school-to-work programs, i.e., Project Skills, Project SEARCH, Pre ETS summer camps, and other trainings (e.g., self-advocacy, self-determination, rights/responsibilities), and promote similar activities, i.e., Parent Connection's "Shift Training".
- Strategy 2.2. Collaborate with employers, CILs, and workforce development system partners to increase opportunities for youth with disabilities to participate in paid work-based learning experiences, explore career options, and develop the soft skills/professional skills necessary for lifelong employment success.
- Strategy 2.3. Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for students and youth with disabilities who are attending post-secondary programs.
- Strategy 2.4. Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students and other youth with disabilities who are exploring their employment future, with an emphasis on those from underserved minorities, i.e., Native American, Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian.
- Strategy 2.5. Conduct outreach activities to identify better and serve underserved youth with disabilities, i.e., youth home-schooled, in foster care, served through alternative educational programs, corrections/juvenile detention programs; to encourage their participation in transition services and programs to improve future employment opportunities.
- Strategy 2.6. Conduct outreach activities for teachers, students with disabilities, and their family members to provide information on VR services and how to access the VR program.

Goal 3: Provide services and supports to assist individuals with disabilities with making informed choices regarding employment, money management, and personal and work relationships, to live as independently as possible.

- Strategy 3.1. Provide training on strategies and tools for VR Counselors to assist clients in reaching their employment goals.
- Strategy 3.2. Promote the utilization of counseling strategies and tools to assess the client's critical strengths and barriers in order to enhance their personal life status and employment skills.
- Strategy 3.3. Explore and utilize different strategies and/or technology in order to increase the amount of time VR counselors engage with clients, especially those with significant disabilities, to improve outcomes impacted by guidance and counseling.
- Strategy 3.4. Identify and assist individuals with disabilities looking for advancement, career change, enhanced earnings to increase client choice and success rate of obtaining a better employment pathway.
- Strategy 3.5. Provide training to staff to improve communication and provide services in a culturally responsive manner.
- Strategy 3.6. Continue efforts to increase and expand provider supports for employment and life skills development.
- Strategy 3.7. Increase awareness, supports, and the utilization of self-employment as an outcome for VR clients.

Goal 4: Facilitate the delivery of VR services to enhance earnings, employee benefits, retention, and career advancement for clients.

- Strategy 4.1. Improve client engagement i.e., rapid engagement, timeliness of eligibility decisions, IPE development, need for other services.
- Strategy 4.2. Reduce the administrative burden to allow meaningful guidance and counseling to engage clients to improve quality of employment outcomes, retention, and advancement.
- Strategy 4.3. Increase knowledge base and understanding of VR, Mental Health, CRP's, Native American VR Programs to enhance service delivery for mutually served individuals.
- Strategy 4.4. Provide cultural humility/intelligence training for VR staff and partners to improve provision of culturally responsive services.
- Strategy 4.5. Increase awareness and referrals to Benefits Specialists and services for VR clients.
- Strategy 4.6. Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities with a focus on individuals with mental illness and other underserved populations, including those living in very rural areas.
- Strategy 4.7. Continue with the development and utilization of vocational skills training for individuals with disabilities.

Goal 5: Facilitate the development of a strong statewide community partnering with workforce systems, businesses, State Government, tribal systems, schools, service providers and service organizations to enhance services to individuals with disabilities eligible for services.

- Strategy 5.1. Continue work to improve the structure, accessibility, and administration of workforce delivery systems across the state to align programs and services in an accessible, seamless, and integrated manner.
- Strategy 5.2. Ensure employers/businesses have access to workers and the technical assistance needed to employ individuals with disabilities; and to increase their understanding of how to attract and retain qualified individuals with disabilities as part of their workforce.
- Strategy 5.3. Expand services to rural and remote areas to provide employment related services, i.e., job development, job coaching, follow along services.
- Strategy 5.4. Identify and work with partners to develop and expand the use of work experience, internships, apprenticeships, and other job entry possibilities at various levels, i.e., local business, county, state, and federal positions.
- Strategy 5.5. Maintain and expand the utilization of extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.
- Strategy 5.6. Continue funding and support for the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council. The innovation and expansion activities from these council's fund support staff for the councils, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Governor's awards, and other activities related to the goals/strategies.

(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—

Goal 1: Implement strategies to increase awareness and access to services/resources.

Strategy 1.1. Promote an Employment First philosophy that WORK is the first and preferred option for all individuals, including youth.

During Program Year 2024, the section 511 subminimum wage reviews were conducted. This was a decrease from 916 the original number of people who were working subminimum wage in Program Year 2017. The Division also provided training to providers and VR Counselors on Customized Employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Division cooperated with the Developmental Disabilities Division on defining and implementing individual supported employment and reimbursement rates for individual placements.

Strategy 1.2. Expand efforts to ensure the state's workforce represents the most advanced, diverse, skilled, and future-ready workers.

During Program Year 2024, the Division funded numerous services for individuals with disabilities to be employed in more advanced, skilled employment:

- 294 individuals in post-secondary training programs.
- 8 individuals utilized online training programs such as Learn Key or Penn Foster training
- The Division also partners with the South Dakota Apprenticeship Program.

Strategy 1.3. Generate concentrated efforts to increase South Dakotan's knowledge and understanding of VR services and ensure that individuals with disabilities can access services through consumer-friendly processes.

The Division redesigned our website to be more accessible and more user friendly for the public. VR Counselors conduct outreach activities annually to include contacting school special education staff and counselors. The Division also developed new brochures and fliers to be shared with the public and potential VR clients.

Strategy 1.4. Increase dissemination of information with potential clients about how to access or connect with VR services (i.e., website, other VR related information).

The Division has created an online referral and online application system. Approximately 265 individuals have applied online during Program Year 2024. Approximately 120 individuals were referred online during Program Year 2024.

The Division's website was redesigned with a focus on accessibility and readability. In addition, a provider was obtained to assist with creating new hardcopy outreach materials and social media outreach.

The Division has contracted with The Sampson House to conduct a market campaign. This includes developing/publishing success stories of past Vocational Rehabilitation clients and social media blasts to provide information on Vocational Rehabilitation. During 4th quarter of Program Year 2024, Facebook Ads had 2,678 link clicks, 1,484 Stack Adapt clicks and Google ads had 937 clicks.

Strategy 1.5. Provide VR related materials and/or information in other languages and make it available as needs are identified.

The DRS VR website is fully accessible; in addition, the public can contact DRS staff to obtain materials in any needed format or language. Forms such as applications, Individual Plans for Employment and other documents are printed in alternate language. The Division purchased Instant Language Assistant for 3 offices to provide communication between VR staff and individuals applying/receiving services. The Division also utilizes Language Line service that translate communication and documents.

Strategy 1.6. Explore and partner with organizations/agencies to broaden outreach efforts to reach underserved minority groups, i.e., Oyate' Circle, Multi-Cultural Center.

The Division currently participates in the Connecting Cultures in Yankton. The Division assigns a VR Counselor to each reservation and work directly with the six Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. The Division has partnered with Disability Rights South Dakota to two informational events on Native American Reservations. (The Division funded and assisted in 5 summer camps on Native American Reservations to promote Pre-ETS.) In previous years, the Division has held a booth and the Lakota National Invitation. The Aberdeen Office participates with the homeless coalition.

Goal 2: Identify and support students and youth with disabilities with making informed choices for successful daily living and participation in education/training leading to career pathways through the provision of individualized services.

Strategy 2.1. Continue to invest resources in developing school-to-work programs, i.e., Project Skills, Project SEARCH, Pre ETS summer camps, and other trainings (e.g., self-advocacy, self-determination, rights/responsibilities), and promote similar activities, i.e., Parent Connection’s “Shift Training”.

In Program Year 2024, the Division funded 426 students in Project Skills, 5 Project SEARCH sites, and 17 Pre ETS summer camps. In addition, VR Counselors would host a variety of Pre ETS employability classes in high schools. Division staff participated in other trainings such as Parent Connection’s “Parent University”.

Strategy 2.2. Collaborate with employers, CILs, and workforce development system partners to increase opportunities for youth with disabilities to participate in paid work-based learning experiences, explore career options, and develop the soft skills/professional skills necessary for lifelong employment success.

During Program Year 2024, there were five-hundred-eighty-six (586) employers that provided work placements for Project Skills experiences. DRS sponsored six (6) 'Let’s Talk Work' events across the state. These events help students with disabilities build the skills needed for successful employment, while also giving them the opportunity to hear directly from employers about the skills they value in the workplace.

Strategy 2.3. Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for students and youth with disabilities who are attending post-secondary programs.

DRS sponsors an annual meeting/training for the South Dakota post-secondary disability coordinators. This training promotes the coordination of services for individuals with disabilities. On May 8-9, 2024, twenty people attended and nine of which were from vocational institutes and college universities. The annual event was held in-person in Chamberlain, SD and had a virtual option as well. The meeting featured an online presenter, Jane Jarrow, to speak about the new protocols on the required documentation for Emotion Support Animals (ESA) on campuses since the number of these requests have increased significantly over the recent years. The format of the meeting also allows Disability Coordinators to discuss situations and brainstorm potential solutions amongst their peers. DRS and SBVI staff also had the opportunity to discuss making referrals to VR services, explained the VR eligibility process, and potential services available to post-secondary students with disabilities pending their individual needs and employment goals.

During the 2023–2024 school year, DRS partnered with post-secondary institutions across the state to host four Catch the Wave events. These one-day workshops are designed for high school students planning to pursue post-secondary education. Attendance numbers included a total of one-hundred-sixty-two (462) individuals: Mitchell Technical College forty-nine (49), Southeastern Technical College two-hundred-twenty-three (223), Northern State University eighty-eight (88), and Black Hills State University one-hundred-two (102).

DRS collaborated with post-secondary institutes in the state to host six “Catch the Wave” events. These are one-day workshops intended for high school students planning to attend post-secondary educational opportunities. Attendance numbers included a total of 532 individuals: Mitchell Technical College – eighty-two (82), South Dakota School of Mines & Technology - one hundred and one (101), University of South Dakota – one hundred thirty-five (135), Lake Area Technical College – sixty-eight (68), Todd County High School – eighty-nine (89), and Northern State University – fifty-seven (57).

DRS works closely with the Dakota Wesleyan University/Lifequest program in Mitchell. This program provides students with disabilities employment skills classes while also providing a post-secondary opportunity. There were six (6) students who were supported by VR during the school year 2023-2024.

During the 2023–2024 school year, DRS supported eleven (11) clients participating in Augie Access at Augustana University. Augie Access is a comprehensive transition and post-secondary program for young adults and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, designed to enhance career employment, social, academic, and independent living outcomes.

DRS also supported ten (10) students in the STRIVE program during the 2023–2024 school year. STRIVE, offered through Teachwell Solutions in coordination with Southeastern Technical College, allows students to take dual-credit courses that count toward both their high school diploma and an associate degree once they officially enroll in college.

Strategy 2.4. Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students and other youth with disabilities who are exploring their employment future; with an emphasis on those from underserved minorities i.e., Native American, Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian.

The Division annually sponsors the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), a five-day event held June 2–6, 2024, on a college campus. YLF provides a unique learning opportunity for forty-two (42) high school students with disabilities, including those from ethnic and racial minority groups. The program helps students explore personal leadership, plan for future careers, develop self-advocacy skills, and expand their knowledge of the services and supports available during the transition from high school to adulthood.

DRS staff present at school transition classes, high school classes, summer Pre-ETS camps, and Independent Living training sessions. These presentations covered information about VR services, employment skills, post-secondary opportunities, and job search supports.

VR Counselors regularly attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and meet with students at the school and/or in their office to discuss post-secondary goals and training needs. Services are set up on an individualized basis for transition students that we are working with. Approximately 33% of individuals applying for VR services are students with disabilities who are on an IEP. Another 2% are students with disabilities not on an IEP.

VR Counselors utilize the Pathful Explore online platform along with other interest inventories to help students with disabilities identify their interests, values, and aptitudes for certain employment considerations. VR Counselors can purchase eTrac accounts for students with disabilities. eTrac is an online curriculum that is designed to teach job search skills to people struggling to overcome barriers to employment. DRS has purchased a comprehensive curriculum for district offices to use with students in completing the five required Pre-ETS. VR Counselors use these workbooks when delivering lessons to students in high school classrooms.

DRS provides a work experience program, Project Skills, for students with disabilities to try various employment options. A student can receive up to 250 hours of paid work experience during a school year and participate in multiple experiences while receiving IEP services through their school district. During Federal Fiscal Year 2024, 426 students with disabilities participated in the Project Skills program. DRS has written agreements with one hundred fifty (150) school districts and educational cooperatives to provide Project Skills. These paid work experiences not

only teach students with disabilities the skills needed to be successful employees but also allow them to try a variety of employment experiences to determine what type of career they want to pursue.

DRS sponsors 5 Project Search sites in South Dakota where 26 students participate during Program Year 2024. The fifth site started August 2024 in Yankton, SD.

During the 2024 summer, DRS offered funding for the Pre-ETS Initiative offering training opportunities for high school students with disabilities focusing on training in workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, instruction in self-advocacy, and information about VR services and other programs available to assist individuals with disabilities. A total of nine (9) entities were involved in this. Altogether, a total of one-hundred-twenty-five (125) participants or students were involved in the trainings, eighty-seven (87) are currently receiving VR services, and thirty-eight (38) are potentially eligible for VR services.

Strategy 2.5. Conduct outreach activities to better identify and serve underserved youth with disabilities, i.e., youth home schooled, in foster care, served through alternative educational

VR counselors partner with Juvenile Detention Centers throughout South Dakota to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to youth as they transition back to their home school districts. In Program Year 2024, five percent (5%) of the youth served were referred by at-risk agencies.

Strategy 2.6. Conduct outreach activities for teachers, students with disabilities, and their family members to provide information on VR services and how to access the VR program.

VR Counselors attend Parent-Teacher conferences and other open house events at schools to meet with students and parents regarding available VR services. VR also attends the annual Project SEARCH Open House to provide information on VR Services for students participating in the program. DRS presented at the Lighting the Way Conference at Augustana University in Sioux Falls to discuss VR services for youth on the Autism Spectrum. DRS presented at the Special Education Conference, TSLP Summer Institute, and the Adult Education Conferences annually. VR counselors regularly attend the monthly TSLP Transition Round-Up Zoom meeting where a variety of topics are discussed. Also attending are Special Education teachers and directors, as well as staff from adult service agencies.

DRS sponsors at least twenty-eight (28) transition events (Catch the Wave, Let's Talk Work, Regional Forums) annually through the Transition Services Liaison Project. During these events, DRS provides teachers, students, and family members with information on VR services. DRS staff have been creating monthly transition newsletters to mail to students and their families to increase outreach. Every month is a different topic that shares resources and supports available to South Dakota students with disabilities. Topics include job interview tips, ways to build your resume, disability disclosure, independent living, self-advocacy, and more. These newsletters are also available on the DRS transition resource website and highlight the benefits of working with a VR counselor.

DRS staff implemented an outreach initiative to connect with Special Education Teachers, Directors, and 504 Coordinators within school districts. At the beginning of each school year, DRS staff meet with these educators to provide information about Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

DRS staff have been creating monthly transition newsletters to mail to students and their families to increase outreach. Every month is a different topic that shares resources and supports available to South Dakota students with disabilities. Topics include job interview tips, ways to build your resume, disability disclosure, independent living, self-advocacy, and more. These newsletters are also available on the TSLP website and highlight the benefits of working with a VR counselor.

DRS staff created a Transition Timeline which provides suggested transition activities and resources based on grade/age level. The Transition Timeline has been distributed by VR counselors and TSLP staff to Special Education teachers/directors and other transition professionals to share with students with disabilities and their families to help them prepare for a successful transition from high school to adulthood. A flyer was also created to distribute to students once they turn 18. This flyer provides information on registering to vote, the importance of obtaining an official state identification card, selective service registration, and supported decision-making resources.

Goal 3: Provide services and supports to assist individuals with disabilities with making informed choices regarding employment, money management, and personal and work relationships, to live as independently as possible.

Strategy 3.1. Provide training on strategies and tools for VR Counselors to assist clients in reaching their employment goal.

The Division has provided each VR Counselor a cell phone with texting ability and a Zoom account as tools to reach and engage individuals applying or are current VR clients. During Program Year 2024, 17,091 texts were sent to applicants/clients

The Division is using Semi-Autonomous Rehabilitation Assistant (SARA). Sara is a client communication software that helps counselors and clients stay in contact. SARA will allow counselors to communicate with clients via email and text messaging- simply respond to whichever is most convenient. SARA will also simplify the process of submitting documentation and scheduling appointments and will send personalized reminders to keep clients progressing toward their goals!

During Program Year 2024, 30,832 SARA notes were sent to applicants/clients.

DRS encourages the professional development of its VR Counselors through the participation of a variety of training and conferences. Participating in trainings that cover a wide range of topics such as transition services, counseling skills and techniques, specific disabilities, and ethics benefits DRS clients by having a VR Counselor with a diverse foundation of knowledge. From July 2022 – June 2023, DRS staff collectively participated in over 900 trainings.

Strategy 3.2. Promote the utilization of counseling strategies and tools to access the client's critical strengths and barriers in order to enhance their personal life status and employment skills.

DRS has provided extensive Motivational Interviewing (MI) training for VR Counselors to provide them with the skills to assess their clients. MI is discussed during regular staff meetings to ensure that VR Counselors are utilizing the tools and assessing motivation during all phases of the VR process. Dr. Trevor Manthy will be providing MI training at the 2025 Fall Conference.

The Division contracted with World of Work, Inc. to provide VR Counselors training on the World of Work Inventory (WOWI). WOWI is a scientifically developed, objective assessment that incorporates three dimension to uncover

the optimal career matches. In Program Year 2025, DRS offered a beginners training opportunity for newer VR Counselor, which 14 attended. There will be a more advanced level training offered to seasoned VR Counselors in Program Year 2026, which 11 will be attending.

Strategy 3.3. Explore and utilize different strategies and/or technology in order to increase the amount of time VR counselors engage with clients, especially those with significant disabilities, to improve outcomes impacted by guidance and counseling.

The Division has provided each VR Counselor a cell phone with texting ability and a Zoom account as tools to reach and engage individuals applying or are current VR clients. During Program Year 2024, 17,091 texts were sent to applicants/clients

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Strategy 3.4. Identify and assist individuals with disabilities looking for advancement, career change, enhanced earnings to increase client choice and success rate of obtaining a better employment pathway.

The Division assisted 4764 individuals with disabilities during Program Year 2024 in receiving VR services. 629 of these individuals were successfully employed. During Program Year 2025, individuals applying for services had an average annual earnings of \$7,250 and when their VR case was closed they had an annual earnings of \$21,537. The Division developed new fliers to promotes career advancement and career change as an employment outcome.

Strategy 3.5. Provide training to staff to improve communication and provide services in a culturally responsive manner.

For Program Year 2024, DRS provided training to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff on topics such as best practices for working with school districts and SARA (client communication software designed to improve communication between VR counselors and clients). VR staff can participate in communication-focused training available on YesLMS (in-house learning management system). Also, there is a SARA workgroup, comprised of a VR program specialist and counselors that's focused on enhancing the use of SARA within DRS.

Strategy 3.6. Continue efforts to increase and expand provider supports for employment and life skills development.

DRS has contracted with Griffin and Hammis Associates to provide a variety of training for providers including Customized Employment Training, preparation for the CESP Certification exam, training for agency leadership, and monthly trainings and community of practice meetings geared toward employment service providers to help them enhance their knowledge and skills.

Strategy 3.7. Increase awareness, supports, and the utilization of self-employment as an outcome for VR clients.

DRS has developed a policy on self-employment and has provided training for VR Counselors to promote the utilization of self-employment. This training promoted ways to best assist VR clients who have a goal of operating a business. This has been promoted further in rural areas and discussions on identifying various generational things (including on the reservations) that may be happening where the next generation could take over and continue to provide a meaningful service to the community. DRS has been successful in working with the Oglala Sioux Tribal VR Program in jointly funding several self-employment cases on the Pine Ridge Reservation

A workgroup was created to update the program's policy and procedures regarding self-employment. The goals of the changes were to increase the support VR could provide, clarify the process for staff and clients, and encourage a process that included presumed competence and minimized the use of screening out clients from self-employment services.

Goal 4: Facilitate the delivery of VR services to enhance earnings, employee benefits, retention, and career advancement for clients.

Strategy 4.1. Improve client engagement i.e., rapid engagement, timeliness of eligibility decisions, IPE development, need for other services.

The Division is using Semi-Autonomous Rehabilitation Assistant (SARA). Sara is a client communication software that helps counselors and clients stay in contact. SARA will allow counselors to communicate with clients via email and text messaging- simply respond to whichever is most convenient. SARA will also simplify the process of submitting documentation and scheduling appointments and will send personalized reminders to keep clients progressing toward their goals!

During Program Year 2024, 30,832 SARA notes were sent to applicants/clients.

All VR Counselors have an assigned work cell phone to utilize texting options to applicants/clients. During Program Year 2024, 17,091 text messages were sent to applicants/clients.

The Rehabilitation Services Administrations compiles a quarterly report on timeliness of eligibility and Individual Plans for Employment (IPE). During Program Year 2024 DRS was 98.9% in meeting the eligibility timeline requirement. During Program Year 2024 DRS was 98.7% in meeting the IPE timeline requirement.

Strategy 4.2. Reduce the administrative burden to allow meaningful guidance and counseling to engage clients to improve quality of employment outcomes, retention, and advancement.

The Division changed its policy on not needing financial needs for job search support services where were typically minimal cost but extensive staff time. The Division utilizes South Dakota and all other state wage data incorporated into the VR FACES case management system. This process saves staff time in obtaining this data in other more time consuming methods.

Strategy 4.3. Increase knowledge base and understanding of VR, Mental Health, CRP's, Native American VR Programs to enhance service delivery for mutually served individuals.

VR Counselors actively work with Tribal VR programs in their area and have regular schedules at the Tribal VR offices. Through these connections, VR Counselors maintain active and positive relationships within those communities. DRS continues to meet at least annually with all five Tribal VR Programs. DRS VR Counselors and State Office staff participate in meetings on the Native American Reservations with individual Tribal VR Programs and events such as Catch the Wave, regional forums, or public listening sessions. Each Tribal VR program has a VR Counselor assigned to their program.

DRS staff participated in the First Responders Disability Awareness Training for Tribal Nations Niagara University and Oyate Circle (the training was the first of its kind in the nation) in Rapid City.

DRS staff participated in Adventure for Leadership and Fulfilment with Access (ALFA) Camp at Lakota Tech High School on Pine Ridge.

DRS contracted with the Oyate Circle at the Center for Disabilities to provide disability awareness training on the Reservations. All the Division staff attended this training. DRS assisted the Independent Living system in receiving funding for independent living services on the 9 reservations.

VR Counselors have presented at Oglala Lakota College and at Little Wound High School Transition Forum. The Division has funded Oyate Circle's summer Pre-ETS called ALFA Camp where students with disabilities participated in Pre-Employment Training Services.

The Division has been having booths and presenting at conferences involving the Mental Health system, Community Rehabilitation Programs and Native American Programs. This the October 2025 annual Fall Conference will include a presentation on the public Mental Health System.

Strategy 4.4. Provide cultural humility/intelligence training for VR staff and partners to improve provision of culturally responsive services.

DRS contracts with YesLMS to offer live and on-demand training opportunities for VR staff. YesLMS is a cloud-based learning management system. VR staff can complete trainings on YesLMS on various cultural competency topics such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility; Intersectionality and Disability: A Culturally Responsive Approach; Disability Etiquette and Language; and Intersecting Identities, Power, Privilege, and Implications for VR.

Strategy 4.5. Increase awareness and referrals to Benefits Specialists and services for VR clients.

The SD Benefits Specialist Network (funded by DRS) provides counseling and advisement services to beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI who are currently working or seeking employment. Benefits Specialists answer questions about how work will impact SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare, and other public benefits. Benefits Specialists also provide information about how work incentives can help beneficiaries increase their earnings. During Program Year 2024, 615 VR current and past clients received services from a Benefits Specialist. The Benefits Specialist Network also provided a series of training sessions in seven different communities. This training is for VR Counselors, Community Support Provider staff, Mental Health Center staff, and state agency staff. Training objectives include understanding the Social Security Administration's eligibility process; understanding how income from employment impacts eligibility for benefits; identifying and directing individuals to programs providing support; recognizing key SSA work incentives; and dispelling myths and encouraging people with disabilities to work. There were 102 individuals who attended these training sessions.

Strategy 4.6. Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities with a focus on individuals with mental illness and other underserved populations, including those living in very rural areas.

During Program Year 2024, the Division paid \$122,146.52 (7516.71 hours at \$16.25/ hour for wages, benefits, and admin costs for paid work experiences for adults with disabilities. This program is very beneficial for individuals with mental illness and other underserved populations

Strategy 4.7. Continue with the development and utilization of vocational skills training for individuals with disabilities.

The Division continues to purchase On the Job Training to Employers for individuals to develop specific employment job skills. The Division also purchases skill training from Goodwill Industries, Rehabilitation Center, Technical Schools and other skills training program such as Great Plains Welding and AE Tech. In Program Year 2024, the Division paid \$18,502 for On the Job Training and \$135,721 for Occupational/Vocational Skills training.

Goal 5: Facilitate the development of a strong statewide community partnering with workforce systems, businesses, State Government, tribal systems, schools, service providers and service organizations to enhance services to individuals with disabilities eligible for services.

Strategy 5.1. Continue work to improve the structure, accessibility, and administration of workforce delivery systems across the state to align programs and services in an accessible, seamless, and integrated manner.

In 2014, DRS, established a single point-of-contact (business specialist) at the state level to establish and maintain partnerships with businesses by offering customized assistance or support for recruiting, hiring, and retaining people with disabilities. This single point of contact continues for DRS.

DRS contracts with nonprofit organizations in the state to provide local assistance, support, and training to businesses (a form of a business-led model) in their local communities, and each of them employs a full-time executive director. The entities are Employment Disability Resources (formerly known as Sioux Falls Business

Resource Network and the Workplace Disability Network of the Black Hills (formerly known as the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills).

DRS has office memberships for personnel to participate in local Human Resources groups and the Chamber of Commerce as another strategy for outreach and partnership opportunities with businesses. Since January 2017, the DRS business specialist has been the Workforce Readiness Director (a volunteer role) on South Dakota's State SHRM Council which she will term off in December 2023. The Aberdeen district supervisor is the diversity chair for the local Society of Human Resource Managers chapter in Aberdeen. The Yankton district supervisor is the diversity chair for the local Society of Human Resource Managers chapter in Yankton.

DRS and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation sponsor at least 12 training annual events for National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The events are promoted to individual businesses and business organizations, which also promote the hiring and retention of people with disabilities.

DRS also conducts outreach to businesses by attending business-related events held throughout the state. For example, had a booth during the State Society of Human Resource Management Annual Conference that was held May 3-5, 2023.

DRS conducts trainings for businesses to provide them with information and resources to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. DRS provides training on topics such as disability etiquette/awareness, WINDMILLS training, basics of mental health disabilities, and other customized training topics. Trainings are provided at no cost to businesses. DRS is also tracking the number of services and supports being provided to employers. During Program Year 2022, DRS provided services and support to 483 South Dakota employers.

Strategy 5.2. Ensure employers/businesses have access to workers and the technical assistance needed to employ individuals with disabilities; and to increase their understanding of how to attract and retain qualified individuals with disabilities as part of their workforce.

DRS has a designated Business Specialist that serves as a state-wide point-of-contact for employers to contact to help as they're recruiting, hiring, or retaining individuals with disabilities. DRS has developed various resources to provide employers such as an overview of VR services available for them, explanation of the Employment Skills Program (work experience), explanation of Job Coaching services and how it works, etc. the DRS Business Specialist also works with VR Counselors to be of support to them connecting with employers in their local communities.

Strategy 5.3. Expand services to rural and remote areas to provide employment related services, i.e., job development, job coaching, follow along services.

DRS has developed contacts in rural communities where some have evolved into regular interagency meetings in rural communities.

DRS staff work closely with the Oyate Circle at the Center for Disabilities in providing disability awareness training on the reservations. DRS staff also participate in the Department of Labor Youth Council which establishes relationships in rural areas to promote education and employment.

DRS has contracted with a provider four full time employment specialist coordinators officed in DRS locations. These employment specialist coordinators travel to rural areas to provide job placement, job coaching and follow along services especially where other providers are not located or available. As of the end of Program Year 2024, they have worked with a total of 293 VR clients.

Strategy 5.4. Identify and work with partners to develop and expand the use of work experience, internships, apprenticeships, and other job entry possibilities at various levels, i.e., local business, county, state, and federal positions.

DRS utilizes a work experience program titled “Employment Skills” where adults or students who are not on an Individual Education Plan can receive up to 250 hours of paid work experience. In Program Year 2024, 147 individuals participated in this program.

DRS also coordinates with DLR work experience programs to provide job coaching and other support services to individuals in need of additional services for successful employment beyond those that can be provided through the DLR program. This partnership gives consumers the “best of both worlds” from each program expanding their success in these kinds of experiences.

51% of the participants are age 17-25

19% of the participants are age 26-35

17% of the participants are age 36-45

10% of the participants are age 46-55

7% of the participants are age 55-65

1% of the participants are over the age of 65

Strategy 5.5. Maintain and expand the utilization of extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.

DRS local offices work closely with Community Support Providers to strengthen employment outcomes to include job coaching and related services. This partnership also includes the development of plans for sustaining employment for individuals who are Social Security recipients.

DRS participates in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) with the Division of Developmental Disabilities. This initiative includes redefining policies and services to support extended employment services for people with significant disabilities.

DRS has funded establishment grants to expand the service capacity of service providers with 18 agencies to add 21 Employment Specialists/Job Coaches available to provide services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

DRS has funded grants to Community Support Providers to develop their expertise in Customized Employment. DRS has completed contracts with about half of CSP’s in South Dakota to cover training expenses for providers interested in learning about and providing Customized Employment Services in South Dakota. This will allow providers to

provide a more individualized service appropriate for individuals with more significant needs that have not been well-served by traditional services.

DRS created the Transition to Extended Service incentive a one-time incentive to long-term service providers to help ensure that individual client supports are discussed and added to the person's support plan as they transition from VR supports to extended services through their provider.

Strategy 5.6. Continue funding and support for the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council. The innovation and expansion activities from these council's fund support staff for the councils, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Governor's awards, and other activities related to the goals/strategies.

(1)

(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

There are six primary indicators of performance under section 116 of WIOA:

1. **Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for Title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);
 - a. 60.9% of participants were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. **Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);
 - a. 54.5% of participants were in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. **Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit:** The median earnings of participants who were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
 - a. For program year 22, the median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit was \$3,579.
4. **Credential Attainment:** The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized post-secondary credential within one year after exit from the program;

- a. In program year 2024, the Division recorded 43.6% of participants attained post-secondary credentials or a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. The Division is making ongoing efforts to train staff for a better understanding of credential attainment and obtaining documentation of participant progress.
 - b.
5. **Measurable Skill Gains:** The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.
 - a. The Division recorded that 70.3% of participants obtained measurable skill gains leading to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment. This percentage is expected to increase in conjunction with staff training.
6. **Effectiveness in Serving Employers:** addresses the program's efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time.
 - a. The Division reports 87% retention rate with wages showing form the same employer second and 4th quarter after exit during calendar year 2023

Employer Services	Total Records
Employer Information and Support Services	187
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	33
Strategic Planning/Economic Development Activities	2
Untapped Labor Pools Activities	3
Training Services	382
Incumbent Worker Training Services	1
Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance	0
Planning Layoff Response	0
Total Services to Businesses	608
Total Employers Served PY22	483
Total Employers Served PY21	576
Total Employers Served PY20	453
Total Employers Utilizing Services More than 1 Year	267
Total Establishments	39,300
Repeat Business Customers PY 22	0.006793893
Retention with the Same Employer PY22	0.11827957

- (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).

Prior to the 1998 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act, the Division of Rehabilitation Services was required to utilize 1.5% of the Federal 110 funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities. The Division continues to use these funds at an increased percentage. During the Program Year 2024, \$116,677 was spent for I&E activities through a contract with

Black Hills Special Services Cooperative to provide staff support for the State Rehabilitation Council (Board of Vocational Rehabilitation) and the State Independent Living Council. The contract provides for the following:

- Support staff for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council contracted through the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. This includes wages and benefits for 1 FTE Board support staff.
- Operational costs, equipment, and travel for support staff and office supplies are paid through the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative.
- Costs involved in having members of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Statewide Independent Living Council attend meetings/training.
- Strategic Planning Initiatives approved by the Board of VR to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services budgets approximately \$224,853 annually for support services and strategic planning activities for both the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

(i) **Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.**

(1) Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) [Yes] VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

(B) [check box] VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

(2) If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of title VI funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

The South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation services are made available on a statewide basis to individuals with the most severe disabilities who have not traditionally been competitively employed or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent. These services are available through the Supported Employment Program.

South Dakota's annual allotment of Title VI-B funds is \$300,000. \$150,000 of this grant award is used for Vocational Rehabilitation clients who are considered youth. This \$150,000 is matched with 10% state funds. Over 97.5% of the Title VI-B funds are spent for consumer services. The state spends less than 2.5% of its

allotment of Title VI-B funds for administrative costs. Supported employment funds are not expended until individuals with disabilities have been determined eligible for the 110 Vocational Rehabilitation Program and are employed. Supported Employment services are purchased by the vocational rehabilitation counselors through an authorization system. Expenditures exceeding the Title VI-B allotment are covered with funds from the 110 Program.

The Division will continue to expend over 97.5% of the Title VI-B funds on direct services for supported employment consumers. Supported employment expenditures exceeding the Federal allotment will continue to be paid from the 110 Vocational Rehabilitation funds. Supported employment funds will be authorized for approved providers of the consumer's choice. The amount of funds authorized will be based upon the individual's needs, type of placement, hours and type of employment. Supported Employment funds can only be used for job coaching and follow-along services.

During the next program year, the Division plans to distribute the Title VI-B funds through the fee for service system as traditionally done in previous years. This allows for Vocational Rehabilitation clients who have greater needs to receive the level of services necessary to help them obtain supported employment. The Division will continue outcome-based contracts with mental health centers for supported employment services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. This contract model has encouraged the mental health centers to provide supported employment services and is a more accessible method of supported employment services for these consumers. These initiatives will help promote the employment of individuals with the most severe disabilities.

- (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.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has invested significant time and resources to improve the quality and extent of supported employment services. The Division has contracted with Griffin-Hammis to provide training and facilitate monthly COP sessions for employment service providers. These monthly trainings are also open to other provider types throughout the state (IL, DD, Mental Health, etc) to help increase awareness about disability in general, the importance of work to an individual's self-confidence and overall well-being, and to educate about employment options and services available through Vocational Rehabilitation. Training on Customized Employment and training to help prep for CESP certification is also offered through Griffin-Hammis annually to increase the skills and capacity of employment service providers in South Dakota to ensure that they are well educated on how to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities. Additionally, the division has developed the Transition to Extended Services (TES) incentive paid out to providers of long-term funding when employment services are added to individual's service plans to ensure that needed services and started by the Vocational Rehabilitation program are continued by the person's long-term funding provider. This combination of services have helped to increase the capacity of service individuals under supported employment in South Dakota.

Youth with disabilities must receive the training and other supports they need to have meaningful opportunities that contribute to employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment. Supported employment

services are defined as job maintenance services provided to people who have significant limitations with multiple impairments who require a high level of support (job training, assistance building natural supports, job coaching, etc.) to maintain successful competitive integrated employment in the community. These supported employment services can last up to 24 months, or longer if a VR counselor and the client jointly agree to an exception to extend that time. For youth with the most significant disabilities can receive supported employment funding for a period not to exceed four years or at such time the youth reach the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. Once supported employment services lead to job stabilization, the individual or youth with significant disabilities may be transitioned to extended services.

Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR 363.4(a) and 34 CFR 361.5I(19)(v).

The Department of Human Services Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Developmental Disabilities revised our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 7/1/2022 to describe the quality, scope and extend of supported employment services. The MOU clarifies the interagency planning and policy development; eligibility and referral process; service delivery; financial responsibility; disputes procedures; training/ technical assistance; and accountability/ monitoring/ reporting. Services for youth with the most significant disabilities are integrated into the entire MOU. In addition, extended services will be available for youth with the most significant disabilities for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever occurs first. With the addition of Customized Employment as an available service, this will better serve youth that may not have been well-served by more traditional services.

This MOU improved the transition of extended services between our agencies. The Division of Rehabilitation Services added a new fee rate when the transition to extended services with the long-term support agency. This procedure will clarify when the transition to extended services begins to assure the VR case remains open for 90 days.

Medicaid waiver funds are available for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities through the public-school system and Medicaid waiver services.

- (ii) **Annual Estimates.** Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

(1) Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—202

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(A) VR Program; and

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Priority Category I – Most Significantly Disabled	2799	2799	\$3,962,015	0
Priority Category II – Significantly Disabled	234	234	\$336,847	
Priority Category III – Not Significantly Disabled	22	22	\$39,475	

(B) Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Priority Category I – Most Significantly Disabled	457	457	\$712,818	0

(iii) **Order of Selection.**

Yes The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

No The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

(1) For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—

(A) The justification for the order;
[text box]

(B) The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and
[text box]

(C) The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.
[text box]

(2) Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?
[check box] Yes
[check box] No

(iv) **Waiver of Statewideenness.** The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideenness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideenness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideenness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideenness, please indicate "not applicable."

The South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) had an approved waiver of 153tatewideenness in the previous state plan. The continuation request has the same types of services that school districts do not consistently provide. This section updates the status of these services.

The Division has implemented a work experience program for students with disabilities called Project Skills. Project Skills provides job placement, job coaching and follow-along services for students with disabilities. This venture is a cooperative arrangement with the local school districts and the Division. South Dakota has 149 public school districts, 14 Educational Cooperatives and 19 Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education Schools statewide. The Division makes this program available to all schools with approximately 145 Public/Educational

Cooperatives/Tribal School districts participating in the program. The program is available to the remaining school districts, but they have chosen not to enter into a contract with the Division.

The Division also funds Project Search initiatives in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Brookings, and Yankton. Project Search is a partnership with a host business, school district and the VR agency. The services from Project Search includes work readiness instruction, 3 work internships, job placement and job coaching. A large host business is needed for Project Search limiting the location and availability of this program.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

(1) Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

- (A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;
- (A) The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
- (A) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Secretaries	9	9	7
Counselor Aides	9	9	9
VR Counselors	38	38	40
District Supervisors	5	5	5
Management	8	8	8
Interpreters	1	1	1

- (A) Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients: In Program Year 2024, there were 4,776 total individuals served. This was a ratio of 1 to 121 individuals served by a VR Counselor. The average open cases for a VR Counselor is 80 individuals per VR Counselor.

(A) Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years: It is estimated that in 5 years, 5,000 individuals will receive VR services annually.

(A)

(2) Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:

(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
SDSU	Masters in VR	14	5

(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.

Recruitment of qualified staff including individuals with minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities is accomplished through promoting vacancies at universities in Region VIII with master level programs. The University of Colorado, Montana State University, South Dakota State University and Utah State University are also sources for recruitment of graduates with master's level degrees in vocational rehabilitation counseling. In addition, South Dakota has three State public universities with programs offering master's degrees in counseling. These three State Universities have expanded their class locations to other universities and distance learning options. Graduates of the following programs are recruited for vocational rehabilitation counselor openings: Doctorate of Education program options, Counselor of Education and Counseling Practice; School Psychology and Educational Psychology, Mental Health Counseling, or Master of Arts in Counseling or Educational Psychology. Graduates are hired and trained to prepare for the Certification for Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) to meet the highest qualifications in the state for rehabilitation counselors.

The announcements for all state positions including the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions are posted on the State web page. The Division also utilizes Facebook, Linkin, Indeed and Google Ads.

Retention and advancement are accomplished through the opportunity for all entry—level vocational rehabilitation counselors to participate in master’s level vocational rehabilitation education programs and, once meeting the requirements for “Senior Counselor”, receive promotion to this level. Leadership and management training and assignments with senior level management teams assist counselors to prepare for supervisory and administrative positions. Senior rehabilitation counselors are encouraged to apply for management and administrative positions when vacancies occur. Opportunities for promotion are available through announcements of supervisory and management positions provided those candidates meet the requirements for the position.

To address the priority of recruiting individuals with disabilities, Bureau of Human Resources and Administration has in SD Administrative Rule the requirement that individuals with disabilities are automatically certified applicants to be interviewed. In addition, any eligible applicant for employment who has been certified severely disabled by a rehabilitation counselor will be certified (eligible to interview) regardless of the ranking the applicant receives compared to other applicants. This ensures individuals who have disabilities will be interviewed and compete for openings in the designated state unit.

- (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.

The Division has established liaison relationships and cooperative agreements with the other partner agencies that are included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and the Combined State Plan. The Division’s Business Specialists is a member of the state’s Workforce Investment Council which deals with training issues system wide.

Training needs of the state’s Native American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs, Centers for Independent Living, the Client Assistance Program and Community Based Rehabilitation Programs are considered in planning annual training activities. Training needs are addressed through a variety of resources including workshops, conferences and seminars hosted by other organizations such as Special Education, DLR, Parent Connection, BHR training, professional organizations, client organizations (SD Association of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind of SD, Community Support Providers of South Dakota, SD National Alliance of Mental Illness and the SD Association of the Deaf), and distance learning are examples of sponsors of training activities in which staff participate. Independent study and mentoring by supervisors and senior rehabilitation counselors are other means for meeting individual staff development needs.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services purchased a learning management system, YesLMS, through the VR Development Group. YesLMS allows the Division to host live, virtual trainings through the platform as well as develop on-demand, self-paced courses. In addition to in-house trainings, YesLMS also offers a library of courses from the VR Development Group, a company that specializes in vocational rehabilitation training, and their partner agencies to provide a large library of additional trainings that are pre-approved for continuing education credits through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certifications. The LMS currently has nearly 200 courses professional development training opportunities.

All DRS employees have individual development plans to address individual training needs and continuing education. Training is tracked on the case management system. DRS works in cooperation with the Blind VR program to plan joint training initiatives in the areas of comprehensive assessment, counseling techniques, job placement services and information and referral of comparable benefits and services. Monthly training sessions address policies and procedures, best practices and other topics related to vocational rehabilitation counseling. DRS works closely with DakotaLink, the state's Assistive Technology Act program, for training and referring individuals for assessment and training in the most updated assistive technology devices for individuals with a disability.

The Division distributes research and information to address the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Rehabilitation Act and requires participation in training and distributes articles and resources to address topics for staff development. Experts from the technical assistance centers are brought in for training seminars and conferences as well as targeted online training for professionals and paraprofessionals. The following are resources (not all inclusive) for training and information that is disseminated to staff:

- **American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC)**
- **National Technical Assistance Center on Transition for Students with Disabilities: The Collaborative (NTACT:C)**
- **Older Individuals who are Blind Training and Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC)**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM)**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)**
- **National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCTRM)**

(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.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

South Dakota does not have a state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, or registration requirements for any of the personnel classifications used by SDVR, and specifically vocational rehabilitation counselors. Individuals hired as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must meet the requirements of 34 CFR §361.18 (c)(ii)

- (A)(1) Attainment of a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, to indicate a level of competency and skill demonstrating basic preparation in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, economics, or another field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with consumers and employers; and
 - (2) Demonstrated paid or unpaid experience, for not less than one year, consisting of—
 - (i) Direct work with individuals with disabilities in a setting such as an independent living center;
 - (ii) Direct service or advocacy activities that provide such individual with experience and skills in working with individuals with disabilities; or
 - (iii) Direct experience in competitive integrated employment environments as an employer, as a small business owner or operator, or in self-employment, or other experience in human resources or recruitment, or experience in supervising employees, training, or other activities;
- or
- (B) Attainment of a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector, in a disability field, or in both business-related and rehabilitation-related fields; and

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are approved to sign all case work documents. Individual Plans for Employment will require a Sr. Vocational Counselor Signature.

Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

A Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a higher classification and pay grade. A Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will meet the requirements of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor but also have obtained/maintained certification of a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). A Senior VR Counselor has all the job functions of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and can independently sign off on Individual Plans for Employment. As of 7/1/2025, 17 employees meet the requirements of Senior VR Counselors and have their CRC.

District Supervisor:

The SD Vocational Rehabilitation Program has five districts, each with a District Supervisor. Each District Supervisor will provide direct supervision of 9 to 15 staff, all personnel matters, conduct all office operations, and have the signature authority of all client case work.

The approved plan must be signed by the Supervisor. The plan will include at a minimum one course each semester unless the individual can present extenuating circumstances that are approved by the State Office.

Personnel Development

The Division is committed to assisting vocational rehabilitation counselors to obtain the necessary academic training and professional experience to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Program Year 2024, 8 Division employees were pursuing their Vocational Rehabilitation master's degree program through South Dakota State University. Two individuals graduated during the past year with a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation and are preparing to take the CRC exam. Another important strategy is coordination of resources to access the most comprehensive training opportunities.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services approaches personnel development through several avenues. Each employee's current level of education and training, as well as short-term and long-term training needs are tracked by supervisors who evaluate methods for addressing these needs annually through the Continuous Performance Communication (CPC) review system. CPC is the State's performance review process intended to increase communications between employees and supervisors. CPC is a series of check-ins and a year-end appraisal. Check-ins occur throughout the year between the supervisor and employee to discuss areas related to performance and growth. At the end of the year, the check-ins are used to determine the employee's year-end appraisal.

The CPC system allows for ongoing feedback between employees and supervisors by incorporating a self-audit while addressing professionalism, work quality and areas for development as well as areas of strength. Training needs are addressed utilizing a form that not only identifies needed training but also includes fields for the date the training is scheduled and the date it is attended. BHR workshops are identified under the following headings: supervisory, job enrichment and technology with "other training" and "job-specific skills" included in the document used to track need and attendance. The training officer works with agency supervisors to identify resources for obtaining training in areas related to vocational rehabilitation (including the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and RSA regulations), including serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and those of minority backgrounds. Training needs are also identified through input from clients responding to satisfaction surveys and input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

- (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 Division employs an interpreter who is available for all training sessions to clients who are deaf or deaf/blind. If additional interpreters are needed, the Division contracts for these services. Braille, materials on disk and enlarged print are provided to all staff or clients who request alternative formats. The Division has developed fee schedules and vendors to pay for interpreters of foreign languages and Native American interpreters. The Division also purchases foreign language interpreting services such as Linguistica and Interpretalk service for interpreting services through phone services.

- (5) As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Training on IDEA and transition services for students with disabilities is coordinated with the DOE Special Education Program and the State Transition Project. The annual Youth Leadership Forum is planned in collaboration with the Special Education Program, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Transition Services Liaison Project. The annual Fall Conferences were a combined effort with the Special Education Program and DLR, which offered a series of transition presentations.

(i) 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.
- South Dakota defines student with a disability ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old. If the 21st birthday occurs after July 1, the individual is still a student with a disability until June 30 of the following year. Youth with a disability is age 14 until under age 25.
 - DRS staff has been appointed by the SD Governor to be part of a panel advising the Office of Special Education of unmet needs within the state regarding the education and services for children with disabilities. The quarterly meetings allow the panel to comment publicly on the state plan and rules or regulations proposed for issuance by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities and the procedures for the distribution of funds under CFR Part 300. Also, staff from the Office of Special Education is also appointed by the SD Governor to review, analyze, and advise the state VR agency by sitting on the Vocational Rehabilitation Board on the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided to VR clients.
 - South Dakota has a cooperative agreement concerning transition services for students with disabilities which was revised in October 2022. This agreement includes the following South Dakota entities: Office of Special Education, Division of Workforce and Technical Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Labor & Regulation, Division of Behavioral Health, and Division of Child Protection Services.
 - The agreement was created to operationalize South Dakota's transition process, Local Educational Agencies and Adult Services Agencies who are part of this agreement, will coordinate transition services for students and youth with disabilities. Coordination maximizes existing resources and funding responsibilities, thus

avoiding duplication, and promoting continuity of service provision. This coordination is important as it assures compliance with providing required services as well as compliance with federal and state laws. The cooperating agencies will also encourage staff to take part in training sponsored by the other cooperating agencies to ensure that services are provided by qualified and appropriately certified staff.

- The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities according to the students' ages for the following services:
 - Consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;
 - Transition planning by personnel of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and school district personnel;
 - Roles and responsibilities of each agency including State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - Financial responsibilities;
- Procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services; and Pre-Employment Transition Services are coordinated between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the State Education Agency through quarterly meetings, distribution on VR Counselor and Transition Staff assigned to each school, participation on each other's advisory council, attending joint training events, and joint funding of the Transition Services Liaison Project.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services are coordinated between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the local school district by joint development of the Individual Education Plans and the Individual Plan for Employment. These documents mirror each other for the transition services for students with disabilities.
 -

(2) Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 CFR 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:

The Divisions of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Rehabilitation Services have a cooperative agreement in place with the South Dakota Department of Education to fulfill the mandates found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act as amended. The focus is to facilitate and coordinate the smooth transition of eligible students with disabilities from school to post-school environments and activities, including education and training and competitive, integrated employment. The agreement was renewed in 2022 and is reviewed on an annual basis.

This Cooperative Agreement, consistent with South Dakota's public policy, promotes and enhances the following principles:

- A. A transition plan, as a component of the Individual Education Program (IEP), will be initiated for every student with a disability age 16 and older or at a younger age as determined by the Local Education Agency (LEA) IEP team. To the extent possible, the IEP will be integrated into the planning documents of all coordinating agencies, and where possible, eliminates duplication of such plans. The IEP will outline all transition services necessary to successfully transition to the next environment or service delivery system and have access to appropriate independent living options in integrated community-based settings.
- B. All students with disabilities have access to a life skills curriculum and independent living services designed to prepare them to live and function in domestic, recreational, social, community, and vocational environments.

- C. All students with disabilities have access to a self-determination curriculum and training to develop self-awareness and prepare them to fully participate in transition planning and to make informed choices on the continuation of community services and supports.
- D. All work and learning opportunities offered will be designed to meet the unique needs of the student and commensurate with the individual's level of ability, interest, and informed choice and should be expected to change over time (i.e., career ladder opportunities).
- E. All students with disabilities will be prepared for and offered "integrated" work settings for "competitive" wages or prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education or training with access to necessary support services. Additionally, all work opportunities will be geared to employer/industry needs.

The cooperative agreement stipulates the responsibilities of the agencies (Education, Human Services and Social Services) and a timeline for services for students from the age of 18 through the age of 21, as well as financial responsibilities for provision of services.

The South Dakota Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services and Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies) will:

- A. Establish a referral process with each LEA ensuring that school personnel are aware of the referral process, eligibility requirements and scope of vocational rehabilitation services.
- B. Meet with LEA personnel to identify potential referrals, as necessary.
- C. Provide consultation to assist in the identification of eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities and their needs for Pre-Employment Transition Services as young as 14 years of age.
- D. Offer an application for services to any student with disabilities who wants to apply for VR services. Determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services within 60 days of application, unless the applicant grants an extension, or the applicant receives a trial work experience.
- E. Participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students with disabilities, when appropriate by providing consultation and technical assistance as needed.
- F. Complete an IPE (Individual Plan for Employment) with each eligible student within 90 days of eligibility determination; with a projected postschool employment outcome or employment goal, unless documented why.
- G. Assist students in making a career choice consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and the informed choice of the eligible individual as it relates to their IEP goal.
- H. Purchase vocational assessments and diagnostic services when needed for vocational rehabilitation purposes and not available from the school.
- I. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to students in the course of transition to competitive employment, taking into consideration any other services or benefits for which the student might be eligible.
- J. When job placement, job coaching or follow-along services are being purchased by DRS or SBVI, the client will be offered a choice of providers available to provide these services, including the LEA.

- K. Offer LEAs the opportunity to enter into a cooperative agreement to participate in Project Skills.
 - L. Sponsor qualified DRS and SBVI clients in the annual Youth Leadership Forum.
 - M. Sponsor qualified DRS and SBVI clients in Project SEARCH initiatives.
 - N. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will meet with school personnel and school counselors to encourage referrals of all students with disabilities, including students with disabilities who have a Section 504 accommodation plan in place or who are eligible for the purposes of Section 504.
- (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;
 - a. The Transition Cooperative Agreement and conceptual framework will be implemented throughout the state, and continuing evaluation of its effectiveness will provide further direction to the participating state agencies. Based on feedback, the collaborating state agencies will revisit the agreement on an annual basis. They will also provide coordination, technical assistance, and training necessary for implementation.
 - (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;
 - a. The cooperating agencies agree that a transition plan, as a component of the Individual Education Program (IEP), will be initiated for every student with a disability age 16 and older or at a younger age as determined by the Local Education Agency. To the extent possible, the IEP will be integrated into the planning documents of all coordinating agencies, and where possible, eliminates duplication of such plans and services. The IEP will outline all transition services necessary to successfully transition to the next environment or service delivery system and have access to appropriate independent living options in integrated community-based settings.
 - (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;
 - a. The cooperating agencies have defined their roles and responsibilities in the Transition Cooperative Agreement which also includes a Timeline for Transition Services that serves as a reference of services based on the students' ages by division.
 - (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;
 - a. The cooperating agencies will work together to market the services available between Local Educational Agencies and Adult Services Agencies to increase access to and opportunities for transition services. For these agencies to carry out effective planning and assessment of transition services, meaningful data on student needs and service outcomes must be available. The cooperating agencies agree to share with each other data on the needs of students with disabilities and the outcomes of services and programs.
 - b. DRS staff are consistently giving presentations to cooperating agencies, students, and their families about how VR can support students with disabilities in the workforce. DRS staff have

also developed and distributed marketing items that are used to highlight services and supports available to South Dakota students with disabilities. These items include:

- Monthly Transition Newsletters for students and their families
- Transition Timeline for SD Students with Disabilities
- Annual Transition Calendar for SD Professional Development

- (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
- a. Per the Transition Cooperative Agreement, South Dakota VR, in consultation with the Local Education Agencies (LEA), will continue utilizing the process of documentation of this process consistent with the confidentiality requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 USC 11232g(b) and 34 CFR§99.30 and 99.31) and 34 CFR 300.622) pursuant to section 511(d) of the Act and §397.10. This documentation must contain, at a minimum (§397.10(a)(1)):
- Youth's name;
 - Determination made, including a summary of the reason for the determination or a description of the activity or service completed;
 - Name of individual making the determination or the provider of the service/activity;
 - Date determination was made, or the required service or activity completed;
 - Applicable signatures and dates by the South Dakota VR Agency or LEA making determination or completion of the required services or activity;
 - Signature of the South Dakota VR Agency personnel transmitting documentation to the youth with a disability;
 - Date and method by which the document was transmitted to the youth; and
 - South Dakota VR Agency and LEA must retain copies of the documentation in a manner consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.333.
- (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.
- a. Per the Transition Cooperative Agreement, language is included that prohibits schools from contracting or arranging employment opportunities with subminimum wage providers. The transition agreement also details the necessary steps individuals with disabilities who are 24 years of age or younger must complete including participating in Pre-ETS under the Rehabilitation Act and transition services under IDEA, are found eligible for VR services with an approved IPE while receiving career counseling and information about available services to programs that could assist with competitive, integrated employment.

(k) Coordination with Employers. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) has been very proactive in working collaboratively with employers. These initiatives consist of the following:

- Point of Contact: The Division has a designated single point-of-contact (business specialist) to disseminate materials, conduct trainings, and serve as a resource to employers, providers, and people with disabilities throughout the state.
- Business-Led Models: There are two nonprofit entities available in South Dakota offering supports to the business communities which are led by employers (business-led model). The entities are the Employment Disability Resources in Sioux Falls and the Workplace Disability Network of the Black Hills. Each entity has an executive director. Both entities have an approved contract in place with the Division to provide education, consulting, and technical assistance to businesses on the hiring, accommodations, supports, and retention when employing people with disabilities.
- Business Organization Involvement: The Division maintains memberships and regular involvement of staff within non-disability related organizations in efforts to collaborate with employers. Some examples of the organizations consist of the local Chamber of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. These opportunities allow for connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and identify any disability training needs they may have.
- Trainings: The purpose of conducting trainings to businesses is to provide them with information and resources to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. DRS provides trainings on topics such as disability etiquette/awareness, WINDMILLS trainings, basics of mental health disabilities, and other customized training topics. Trainings are provided at no-cost to businesses.

(1) transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

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- Business Organization Involvement: The Division maintains memberships and regular involvement of staff within non-disability related organizations in efforts to collaborate with employers. Some examples of the organizations consist of the local Chamber of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. These opportunities allow for connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and identify any disability training needs they may have.
- Trainings: The purpose of conducting trainings to businesses is to provide them with information and resources to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. DRS provides trainings on topics such as disability etiquette/awareness, WINDMILLS trainings, basics of mental health disabilities, and other customized training topics. Trainings are provided at no-cost to businesses.
- Project Skills: Project Skills is a paid work experience program with employers for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between

the state vocational rehabilitation agencies, employers, and local school districts providing students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps build the student's work history, references, and assist them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges. Vocational rehabilitation counselors and school staff identify employment sites to match the areas in which students have expressed an interest in working.

- Project Search: Project SEARCH is a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities. Students who want to work have the chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The goal of the Project SEARCH program is competitive employment for each intern. Designed as an internship program, Project SEARCH affords students the opportunity to put employability skills into practice. South Dakota currently has 5 Project SEARCH initiatives in Aberdeen, Brookings, Sioux Falls (Teachwell Education Cooperative), Sioux Falls School District, and Rapid City/Sturgis. Another Project SEARCH initiative is scheduled to start in Yankton at the beginning of 2024.

(I) 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 Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency for implementing the section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act. The AT Project is contracted to DakotaLink to promote and expand AT services. In addition, the Department has an established fee schedule to purchase services from DakotaLink.

- (2) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture; The South Dakota Rural Development State Office is located in Huron, SD. Their website is: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sd>. We provide information about their services of loans, development grants, and housing to VR clients who may benefit from their programs/services. We refer people to their programs and visa versa when appropriate.

South Dakota also has and AgrAbility Program located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This program enhances quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

- (3) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;
The Division of Rehabilitation Services works closely with the Boxelder Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center. In this program, VR clients can receive training in carpentry, nurse assistant, culinary arts, electrical, facilities maintenance, forestry conservation, firefighting, office administration, painting, and welding.

- (4) State use contracting programs;

South Dakota does not have any State Use laws or contracts.

- (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 Department of Social Services (DSS) is the state's Medicaid Agency. The Department of Human Services has the following agreements with the DSS Medicaid Agency.
 - Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation as well as Guardianship and Conservatorship: This agreement assures each agency's response to meet the needs of persons who are at risk for abuse, neglect and exploitation or in need of guardianship and or conservatorship services. This agreement is updated/amended an any time upon the mutual consent of both Departments.
 - Money Follows the Person: This agreement was implemented for the implementation of the Money Follows the Person initiative involving persons eligible for waiver services.
 - Medicaid Fraud Control: This agreement was implemented for the purpose of defining mutual responsibilities in the Medicaid Program to ensure maximum efficiency and benefit to the State and to minimize duplication of effort. This agreement is updated/amended an any time upon the mutual consent of both Departments.
 - Title XIX Medicaid Funding Memorandum of Understanding: This agreement was for the purpose of defining administrative and fiscal accountability responsibilities. This agreement is updated/amended an any time upon the mutual consent of both Departments.
 - Protected Health Information Memorandum of Understanding: This agreement implemented policy on restrictions of disclosing protected health information. This agreement is updated/amended an any time upon the mutual consent of both Departments.

- (6) State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;
The Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This agency is in the same department as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs allowing regular communication between programs.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities updated the Policy Memorandum on July 1, 2022 with the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Policy Memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated in regards to the time limited and on-going support services. This policy agreement has had a significant impact in changing how services are provided to individuals with the most significant impediments to obtain and maintain their employment.

- (7) State agency responsible for providing mental health services;
- The Department of Social Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with mental illness. This Memorandum of Understanding was updated to help coordinate the services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health Services, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness:
 - What services can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center,
 - What services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation, and
 - Which agency pays for the different services.

- This agreement was revised on December 2018. This agreement is updated/amended an any time upon the mutual consent of both Departments.

(8) Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system; and The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors works with a large variety of local and state agencies in their local communities. This can include Chamber of Commerce organizations, Human Resource organizations at the local and state levels.

Other 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 consist of:

Project Skills

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has cooperative agreements with local school districts throughout South Dakota for the provision of transition services. This program provides paid work experiences in student's career areas to help them prepare for adulthood and the world of work.

Project Search

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has cooperative agreements with local Project Search sites for Aberdeen, Brookings, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Sturgis locations. This agreement lays out each party's responsibility for the Project Search activities.

(9) Other private nonprofit organizations.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services works extensively with the 21 Community Service Providers, 11 Community Mental Health Centers throughout South Dakota, Centers for Independent Living and South Dakota Deaf Resources & Outreach Programs. We have issued establishment grants with them to establish/expand supported employment and customized employment services. The Division also has an established fee schedule for purchasing employment services from these agencies.

SBVI Portion of the Combined State Plan and Plan Modifications under the

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

(a) State Rehabilitation Council. All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has (select A or B):

[check box] (A) is an independent State commission.

[X] (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	Term 2	4/2025
Parent Training and Information Center	Term 1	6/2023
Client Assistance Program	Exempt from Term Limits	11/2025
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	Term 1	09/2024
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	Term 1	4/2025
Business, Industry, and Labor	Term 1	Vacant
Business, Industry, and Labor	Term 2	8/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	Term 1	4/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	Term 2	9/2024
Disability Advocacy Groups	Term 1	8/2024

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	Term 1	8/2024
	Term 1	6/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Exempt from Term Limits	8/2018
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Term 1	10/2023
State Workforce Development Board	Term 1	12/2024
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	Exempt from Term Limits	8/2024

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 is meeting the requirements of Section 105(b). Nominations for Board of SBVI are sought for members whose terms expire on an annual basis, or they resign before their terms expire. Requests for nominations are sought from consumer organizations, agency staff, WIOA programs including the Workforce Development Board, VR clients, and other partner organizations with representation on the Board. The Board is comprised of at least 15 members, with a majority of the individuals with vision loss or blindness not employed by the state VR agency.

The Board of SBVI meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public and held in accordance with the requirements in the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting laws, SDCL, 1-25-1. All meetings are publicized via the State of South Dakota Boards and Commissions Portal. The agenda is posted at all meeting sites and is available in alternative formats. Meetings are held in accessible locations with the option to attend virtually. Dates, times, and location of meetings are determined by members of the Board of SBVI. Public comment is a standing agenda item on all Board of SBVI agendas in accordance with open meetings laws.

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 Board of SBVI provided input on the following programs and projects and approved all recommendations:

- **Review and approve the annual Board report, providing feedback and suggestions prior to finalization and submission to RSA and the Governor.**
- **Review the comprehensive statewide needs assessment in December 2025, offering suggested changes to the WIOA state plan goals.**
- **Consumer satisfaction survey results are reviewed and analyzed. The Board of SBVI provided input into the questions in the survey. Staff training has been implemented due to survey results identifying a need to improve adjustment to blindness counseling and improved timeliness from application to plan development/rapid engagement.**
- **Draft program guides and policies are reviewed and approved by the Board.**
- **Board members are nominated for subcommittees to participate in the selection and provide updates to the Board of SBVI on Governor's Awards selections and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) events.**
- **Approved financial support by the Board of SBVI for the Governor's Awards Ceremony, NDEAM community events, and sponsorships at blindness-related events. These include raising awareness of Usher Syndrome and outreach of the SBVI program through a vendor booth at the Run, Walk and Roll event hosted by University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities on September 20, 2025. The Board also approved assistance with rental fee and shipping for a 3D Art Exhibit to be held at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls, SD March 1, 2026 – May 31, 2026. This event is being hosted by the State Chapter of National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota and will allow blind and low vision students and individuals to experience accessible tactile art, raising awareness of and allowing blind or visually impaired individuals to engage with art using their other senses.**

Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities (NDEAM): The Board of SBVI sponsors NDEAM activities each October to promote employment of people with disabilities to employers and South Dakota citizens. Board members serve on a committee with Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and Statewide Independent Living Council members to make recommendations on proposal for events that are submitted by local committees from communities around the state. The Board votes on contributions to support the events and members are invited to attend the events.

SBVI Response: The Division supported the Board's recommendations on NDEAM activities.

Governor's Awards Recognizing Employment of Citizens with Disabilities: The annual Governor's Awards event is held to recognize individuals, employers, and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This annual event is a joint effort of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services.

SBVI Response: The Division supported the Board's recommendation to assist with the Governor's Awards and supported attendance by Board members. The Board has representatives who assist with making the award selections along with a committee of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF): The YLF is held annually with 40 + students in attendance each year. Several participants who are blind are supported by SBVI. YLF makes a significant impact in the students' lives through interaction with peer mentors and activities that teach self-advocacy skills.

SBVI Response: The Division agreed with the Board's recommendation to support the annual Youth Leadership Forum for participation of transition age students with vision loss.

Board of SBVI and consumer organization representation at Disability Day at the state capitol during legislative session was recommended by the Board.

SBVI Response: The Division agreed with and supported sponsorship and participation of the Board and consumer organizations at Disability Day at the capitol.

No recommendations have been rejected.

(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:

The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:

The South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Rehabilitation Services contracted with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative to assist with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This assessment is completed every three years, and the most current assessment for SBVI was completed on November 13, 2025.

The CSNA was conducted in partnership with both State VR Rehabilitation Councils (Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired) and partner agencies. The CSNA consisted of reviewing VR state and national data; South Dakota disability and employment data; review of consumer satisfaction surveys; surveys of staff, providers and businesses; and in-depth interviews with key informants.

(A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;

Mental health challenges were identified as the primary barrier for individuals with the most significant disabilities, affecting both entry into and retention of employment. Staff pointed to two key

systemic issues:

- 1. Insufficient trained staff to support individuals with high needs, especially those with significant behavioral challenges.**
- 2. High turnover rates among direct support professionals, which undermines continuity of services.**

Staff consistently called for expanded, on-site job coaching that addresses soft skills, interpersonal conflicts, and workplace adjustments in real time, as well as expanded mental health counseling and long-term employment supports.

According to interviews conducted with services providers and community partners, two primary barriers were identified:

- 1. Risk aversion among families, schools, and some providers, which can prevent individuals from being placed in real employment settings.**
- 2. Employer stigma and lack of understanding about the capabilities of individuals with significant disabilities.**

Providers highlighted the urgent need for a standardized, statewide job coach training program. Current training is fragmented, with each provider creating its own system. A more formalized program could improve consistency, prepare staff to support both clients and employers, and strengthen employment outcomes.

- (B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;**

Participants interviewed noted progress in outreach to minority communities but emphasized persistent gaps. Awareness of VR services remains low in some communities, particularly among immigrant and non-English-speaking populations. Language barriers and the lack of culturally relevant outreach approaches were highlighted as ongoing challenges.

Suggested improvements included stronger referral partnerships with trusted community organizations, more accessible and mobile-friendly forms, and investment in assistive technology and virtual service delivery to ensure rural and minority populations can access services.

Staff agreed that there are no populations entirely unserved, but awareness gaps prevent some individuals from accessing VR. Populations noted as underserved include immigrant and non-English-speaking residents and, in some areas, tribal communities, where lack of awareness and resource navigation present barriers.

Staff also cautioned that VR counselors are stretched thin, raising questions about whether services can be delivered effectively to all groups given limited staffing and resources.

Engagement with minority groups remains inconsistent. Providers noted that language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of outreach contribute to gaps in access.

Recommendations included:

- Expanding availability of information and forms in multiple languages.**
- Partnering with trusted local organizations and community leaders.**
- Establishing VR “home bases” in rural community centers or clinics to increase visibility and trust.**

While providers agreed that no populations are entirely unserved, several were noted as underserved:

- Immigrant and non-English-speaking populations who face challenges accessing information and navigating systems.
- Tribal communities, where resources may be less accessible.
- Older adults, particularly those experiencing vision loss later in life, who may not be immediately connected to VR.

(C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

Interviewees underscored the importance of cross-agency coordination. Monthly meetings, memoranda of understanding, and shared referral systems were identified as helpful strategies already in place. However, additional cross-training of workforce staff and clearer “guardrails” about which populations each agency should serve are needed to reduce duplication and maximize resources.

Populations that could benefit most from stronger system coordination include individuals with disabilities who are not the most significant, as well as tribal and immigrant communities that face structural barriers to accessing workforce services.

Providers identified individuals with intellectual and multiple disabilities as the group that could benefit most from better coordination. Stronger wraparound supports and collaborative planning between VR, schools, workforce agencies, and employers are needed.

Monthly partner meetings and workforce coalitions were viewed positively, but providers called for more actionable and consistent coordination across state agencies.

To strengthen partnerships with the workforce development system, a new Department of Labor and Regulation Strategic Referral Form has been developed by the Workforce Development Program through SD Department of Labor and Regulation. The WIOA partner has developed this online referral form specifically for vocational rehabilitation counselors to help identify services available for VR clients through the Workforce program. Summer 2025 their Senior Community Service Employment Program was filled to capacity and no longer able to accept referrals to that program. However, they continue to welcome referrals for individuals over age 18 who are interested in on-the-job training or post-secondary training and youth ages 18-24 who are not in school and interested in a paid work experience, on-the-job training, and post-secondary training, including apprenticeship opportunities.

- (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 greatest challenge in serving transition-age youth stems from funding restrictions, which limit the scope of in-school services and shift focus on youth ages 18–24 after graduation. In addition, some pre-employment transition trainings are underutilized due to limited awareness and challenges in recruiting participants.

Improvements are needed in early intervention, ensuring youth are connected with community resources and work opportunities before they exit school. Stronger connections between career and technical education programs, schools, and local businesses, including pre-apprenticeship opportunities, were emphasized as promising strategies.

The transition from school to VR services remains a significant gap. Providers noted that schools are often too focused on academics, with career and independent living skills introduced too late. This leaves

students underprepared when they exit high school.

Key challenges include:

- Lack of a consistent statewide framework for Pre-ETS.
- Uneven implementation of transition curricula across districts.
- Limited opportunities for early work experiences before age 18.

Providers strongly advocated for earlier intervention, structured guidance from the state, and closer integration of VR with schools and career and technical education programs.

(1) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

VR staff had limited input on community rehabilitation program development and sustainability. However, innovative practices such as the use of community health workers were mentioned as promising for filling service gaps and reducing reliance on emergency services.

VR staff identified the single most important change: Expand access to real-time job coaching and increase investment in the direct support workforce to improve employment sustainability for people with disabilities.

Additional resources needed: More trained employment specialists, broader outreach to minority and immigrant communities, and expanded community-based supports to ensure continuity of services. Interviews were also conducted with service providers and community partners to gather perspectives on challenges, gaps, and opportunities in delivering vocational rehabilitation services. Providers offered insights into emerging practices, barriers faced by specific populations, and strategies for improving coordination across systems.

Sustainability of CRPs remains a concern, especially in rural areas. Providers recommended:

- Stronger state support for convening working groups and coalitions that bring CRPs, schools, and employers together to share strategies and resources.
- Investment in training pipelines to address staff shortages.
- Development of community health worker models and cross-training initiatives to fill service gaps.

Providers identified the most important change needed: Implement a statewide job coach training program and expand early transition services for youth.

Additional resources needed: Increased staffing capacity, consistent cross-agency coordination, multilingual and culturally responsive outreach, and more structured state guidance for schools and transition programming.

(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 Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired Strategic Planning and Policy workgroup met on 1/24/2023, 3/23/2023 and 8/21/2023 to develop new goals and strategies. These goals and strategies were then presented to the full board of SBVI on 9/15/2023 with suggested changes. Additions and revisions were made, and the Executive Committee of the Board met and approved the goals and strategies. The amended goals and strategies were shared and approved by the full board at the December 2023 Board meeting.

- (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 post-secondary 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.

Goal 1: Increase VR client successful employment outcomes. (Recommended by SRC)

Strategy 1.1: Improve timeliness from application to service provision to ensure client engagement.

Strategy 1.2: Increase counselor/client engagement as full partners in the development of services.

Strategy 1.3: Decrease unsuccessful closures through consistent client/counselor engagement and emphasizing the value of service provision.

Goal 2: Improve quality guidance and counseling services to Vocational Rehabilitation clients. (Recommended by CSNA)

Strategy 2.1: Provide counseling skills training to increase comfort and skills level of counselors.

Strategy 2.2: Improve consumer satisfaction results and follow up with respondents who express dissatisfaction with SBVI services.

Strategy 2.3: Prioritize counseling and guidance by aligning duties with clear expectations for committing time to provide counseling to clients on a consistent basis.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of and access to SBVI services. (Recommended by SRC)

Strategy 3.1: Expand outreach in communities to include organizations such as National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, SD Association of the Blind, Lions Clubs, Sertoma, Rotary, Kiwanis, Optometric Society, and local referral sources.

Strategy 3.2: Annually conduct activities that promote services for individuals with vision loss including those from minority backgrounds, such as individuals working with local Lutheran Social Services Center for New Americans and tribal vocational rehabilitation programs.

Strategy 3.3: Update and ensure accessibility of the SBVI website and outreach materials and procedures that staff utilize to promote services to clients, referral sources, employers, and other entities.

Goal 4: Build capacity to increase staff engagement, expertise, and retention of qualified staff. (Recommended by SRC)

Strategy 4.1: Create individual development plans with counselors based on training and development needs.

Strategy 4.2: Cross train staff to ensure sustainability and build expertise.

Strategy 4.3: Provide mentoring opportunities for newer staff with a focus on understanding blind culture.

Goal 5: Strengthen the agency's ability to provide quality services to minority populations in South Dakota. (Recommended by CSNA)

Strategy 5.1: Provide training opportunities to SBVI staff on culturally relevant service provision and cultural sensitivity.

Strategy 5.2: Collaborate with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to ensure that eligible individuals are served in an effective and efficient manner on reservations and tribal lands.

Strategy 5.3: Inform minority populations of vocational rehabilitation services and the role of SBVI to meet the needs of those who are blind or visually impaired in these populations.

Goal 6: Improve coordination of services to facilitate the transition of students from high school to post-secondary education and/or training in preparation for employment. (Recommended by SBVI Admin)

Strategy 6.1: Increase the number of potentially eligible students referred by SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Consultants and Vision Transition Specialist.

Strategy 6.2: Increase the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with visual impairments through outreach to public and Tribal schools across South Dakota.

Strategy 6.3: Promote participation in transition activities such as Project Skills, Project Search, Youth Leadership Forum, Rehab. Center for the Blind Transition Week, and Employment Skills Training for students who are blind or visually impaired.

(d) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs

Goal 1: Increase VR client successful employment outcomes.

Strategy 1.1: Improve timeliness from application to service provision to ensure client engagement.

SBVI provided rapid engagement training to VR counselors on April 28, 2025, and leadership staff have been participating in Rapid Engagement Community of Practice webinars through VRTAC-QM. Internal processes have been developed to ensure counselors meet timeliness requirements. As a result of these activities, SBVI has decreased the number of days from application to plan development. In PY 2024, SBVI experienced a decrease to 56 days average, a 28.7% improvement from PY 2023 at 78.6 days average.

Strategy 1.2: Increase counselor/client engagement as full partners in the development of services.

SBVI updated the case management system to be able to document incidents of in-house guidance and counseling as they occur through case notes. This was implemented in December 2024. SBVI is working to develop a report to track in-house services by counselor and this data will be added to the quarterly caseload reports provided to counselors and supervisor. Adding this data to the quarterly caseload reports will emphasize increased engagement with clients through guidance and counseling and ensuring the engagement is documented properly in the case management system.

Strategy 1.3: Decrease unsuccessful closures through consistent client/counselor engagement and emphasizing the value of service provision.

In PY 2024, SBVI had 46 unsuccessful closures after services were provided with a 51% success rate. This is a slight decrease in unsuccessful closures from the previous year, which resulted in 51 unsuccessful closures after services were provided with a 51% success rate, consistent with the previous year. SBVI has a renewed focus on rapid and consistent engagement throughout the life of the case. SBVI anticipates fewer unsuccessful closures after services are provided. Success rate is recorded on a quarterly basis in the quarterly caseload reports by counselor caseload. SBVI Supervisor can address success rates as part of counselor performance, identifying opportunities to improve engagement with clients, and ensuring counselors aren't closing cases prematurely.

Goal 2: Improve quality guidance and counseling services to Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

Strategy 2.1: Provide counseling skills training to increase comfort and skills level of counselors.

SBVI reviewed consumer satisfaction survey results and identified that ratings were lower than expected for counselors to assist clients to emotionally adjust to their vision loss. To address this low satisfaction, SBVI contracted with Rising Hope Counseling, LLC, to provide training on adjustment counseling to all SBVI staff during the SBVI All Staff Training July 16-18, 2024. Training included grief counseling, empowerment, supporting resilience in visual impairment, and understanding the grief cycle in the context of visual impairment or blindness. Counselors were taught about coping skills, ways to improve therapeutic alliance, counseling techniques and tools, such as active listening and empathy, facilitating acceptance and solution focused therapy techniques. Role play and group discussion around sample cases were a beneficial portion of the training.

Strategy 2.2: Improve consumer satisfaction results and follow up with respondents who express dissatisfaction with SBVI services.

Consumer satisfaction surveys are sent out to all clients on a quarterly basis whose cases were closed after services were provided. Surveys are sent out based on client preference, either through mail or email. Follow up phone calls to clients who haven't responded to give them an opportunity to complete the survey by phone, if they prefer. This step also increases the satisfaction survey response rate. Clients have an opportunity on the survey to provide contact information if they want a follow up call if they are experiencing any problems or have concerns. Survey participants who express dissatisfaction and provide their contact information receive a follow up phone call to attempt to resolve any issues.

Consumer satisfaction surveys are sent out quarterly and tracked during the federal fiscal year. Surveys are mailed/emailed out of secretarial staff, who also tracks and follows up with phone calls. There was a vacancy in that position during the beginning of the third quarter, and lack of responses did not get followed up on in a timely manner. This resulted in a decrease in responses to the survey.

Results for FFY 2025 did show improvement in multiple areas. SBVI experienced a 6% increase in satisfaction in counselors helping clients to adjust to their vision impairment from the previous year, which was a substantial improvement from the previous two years of survey results. This is likely a result of the high quality training counselors received on adjustment to blindness, supporting resilience in visual impairment training they received in July 2024. In addition, SBVI saw an increase in quality of services provided, services provided assisted the client in achieving independence, timely services, services helped with employment, and the amount of help they received. Overall, SBVI survey results rated higher in FFY 2025 than the previous three years.

Strategy 2.3: Prioritize counseling and guidance by aligning duties with clear expectations for committing time to provide counseling to clients on a consistent basis.

SBVI utilizes SARA (Semi-Autonomous Rehabilitation Assistant), a communication hub that assists staff with a variety of case management tasks. All SBVI counselors have a cell phone with texting ability and tools to engage clients. SARA allows counselors to communicate utilizing automatic texting and email to schedule appointments, send reminders, and request information from clients through an automated system. The automated messages and update requests serve as a safety net to ensure communication continues during all phases of the case. With automated case management tools, counselors can focus on guidance and counseling with clients and providing services necessary to achieve their employment goal. This tool has opened new avenues for documentation and maintaining client contact.

SBVI identified a need to improve guidance and counseling to help clients as they navigate through their grief as they experience vision loss. A counseling consultant was hired to provide training to all SBVI staff during the All-Staff Training in July 2024. This training focused on understanding the process of grief in the context of visual impairment and the supportive role of the VR counselor, including teaching coping strategies and helping in the acceptance process. With a focus on rapid engagement and tools to strengthen the counselor/client relationship, client satisfaction increased.

SBVI will begin tracking guidance and counseling occurrences in the quarterly caseload reports which will increase focus on the expectation that guidance and counseling remain a high priority and critical service necessary in the VR process.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of and access to SBVI services.

Strategy 3.1: Expand outreach in communities to include organizations such as National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, SD Association of the Blind, Lions Clubs, Sertoma, Rotary, Kiwanis, Optometric Society, and local referral sources.

Examples of outreach and strengthened partnerships in communities around the state include:

SBVI VR staff provided basic orientation, mobility, and sighted guide training to volunteers at the 2025 Black Hills Regional Ski for Light event to assist individuals with vision impairments to navigate their way down the ski slopes. SBVI also met with a representative from Great Bear's Adaptive Skier Program to discuss inclusive recreation opportunities for individuals with vision loss.

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff presented at the Sioux Falls Lions' Club *Dining in the Dark* event, which raised awareness and funds for Leader Dogs for the Blind. The presentation promoted SBVI's mission and expanded connections with Lions Club members who are active in vision-related community service.

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind Employment Skills Training Supervisor, also a Certified Brain Injury Specialist, facilitated a brain injury support group, participated in statewide networking events, and attended the Brain Injury Alliance board meeting. These efforts increased cross-referrals and awareness of SBVI services for individuals with both vision loss and brain injuries.

SBVI staff hosted an informational booth at the South Dakota Optometric Society Spring Convention. SBVI staff engaged with providers statewide, shared low vision resources, and connected with a new pediatric ophthalmologist interested in local referral partnerships.

Rehabilitation Center Manager participated in the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Network, which led to key connections with community and city leaders, including the Sioux Falls Director of Planning and Development. These conversations opened collaboration opportunities related to city transportation access. The Manager also spoke at VRA Vision's ribbon-cutting event, building relationships with the retinal specialist team, who later toured the Center to learn about SBVI services.

Counselors connected with and strengthened partnerships with SD Association of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind SD, Sioux Falls Sled Hockey, The Legacy Foundation, Salvation Army (Sioux Falls, Aberdeen,), Small Business Development Center, Independent Living Choices (Watertown, Aberdeen, Sioux Falls), Human Service Agency (Watertown), Lions Clubs in Groton, Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, Deadwood, and Yankton, Northeastern Mental Health, Good Samaritan Society (Spearfish), St. Vincent de Paul (Spearfish), Goodwill (Rapid City), SHIFT Garage (Rapid City), Rural Office of Community Services (Wagner), Ability Building Services (Yankton), SESDAC (Vermillion), Rapid Area Vision Education, and Pathways (Yankton).

Collaboration occurred with local resources at local interagency and community partner meetings, including Minnehaha County, Grant County, Sioux Falls DSS-EA Leadership group, Integrated Care and Consultation, The Legacy Foundation, Young Adult Transitions program, Sanford Job Fair, and Transition Roundup in Chamberlain.

SBVI provided outreach and support to other consumer organizations including: Spearfish Low Vision Support Group, National Federation of the Blind's annual conference, SD Furniture Mission, SD Association of the Blind's White Cane Walk, Vermillion NDEAM, Sioux Falls NDEAM, Yankton NDEAM, SDAB's Virtual Peer Support Group.

Strategy 3.2: Annually conduct activities that promote services for individuals with vision loss including those from minority backgrounds, such as individuals working with local Lutheran Social Services Center for New Americans and tribal vocational rehabilitation programs.

Examples of activities that promote services and partner with tribal VR programs, especially on many of South Dakota's tribal reservations include:

SBVI VR staff met with staff at Indian Health Services in Lower Brule to encourage collaboration on the Lower Brule Reservation. To increase awareness of VR services with tribal schools, SBVI met with staff at the Wakpala High School on the Standing Rock Reservation, exchanged outreach materials and contact information with the SPED Director of Flandreau High School on the Flandreau Santee Reservation.

SBVI staff traveled throughout the Oglala Lakota Reservation to meet with clients and community resources. Contacts included the Tribal VR office, Oglala SSI Office, Oglala Transit Office, Oglala Sioux Housing, and Oglala Sioux Tribe Human Resources to gather information about their resources and share SBVI outreach materials and contact information.

Several VR Staff helped support activities at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind's Transition Week training for students from across the state. This allows them to get to know some of the students on a more personal level and better understand their backgrounds. Every year, students attending Transition Week have ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Strategy 3.3: Update and ensure accessibility of the SBVI website and outreach materials and procedures that staff utilize to promote services to clients, referral sources, employers, and other entities.

The state of South Dakota Bureau of Information Technology has ensured that the SBVI website and all state agency websites are fully accessible. SBVI is rolling out an updated version of the SBVI VR program intake packet, which is more customer-friendly with plain language. This version will be completely accessible and available in large print and Braille versions. Applications, individualized plans for employment, and other documents can be printed in alternate language and the Division also utilizes Language Line services to translate communication and documents as needed.

Goal 4: Build capacity to increase staff engagement, expertise, and retention of qualified staff.

Strategy 4.1: Create individual development plans with counselors based on training and development needs.

The VR supervisor has created individualized development plans with each counselor, identifying training needs and goals for the upcoming year. These plans are based on their training needs as indicated in individual case file review results, pursuit of master's classes

to obtain CRC certification, and skills of blindness/low vision techniques based on their current level of expertise. Progress toward plan goals is discussed regularly during counselor/supervisor check-ins and year end appraisals.

This past year, SBVI recognized multiple staff members who increased their education and expertise, obtaining certifications in Vocational Evaluation, Rehabilitation Counseling, Low Vision Therapy and Employment Specialist. Efforts to increase staff development result in quality employment services to individuals experiencing vision loss and blindness. Additionally, SBVI staff continue to pursue certifications in rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology.

Strategy 4.2: Cross train staff to ensure sustainability and build expertise.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind manager is focusing this next year on cross training teachers at the Rehab Center to ensure there is class coverage and teachers can have backups for classrooms as needed. This will increase flexibility in staff schedules, reduce stress, and improve camaraderie at the Center.

The Center is also working to renew their home mechanics program through specialized training by a former home mechanics instructor. Training is occurring with all teachers on the use of woodworking and home mechanics tools. Home mechanics services declined at the Rehab Center when a previous teacher retired, and no other staff had been trained to provide those services. A curriculum will be developed to include teaching guides, safety protocols, and project instructions for home mechanics at a beginner, intermediate, and advanced level, based on client interests, skills and abilities.

Strategy 4.3: Provide mentoring opportunities for newer staff with a focus on understanding blind culture.

SBVI has plans this upcoming year to implement an internal job shadowing experience project. SBVI has three separate areas: field office vocational rehabilitation program, field office independent living older blind program, and Rehabilitation Center for the Blind training. The intent is to offer job shadowing opportunities for staff to learn more about the day-to-day job tasks, skills and expertise needed for each area. For example, field IL rehabilitation teachers will be able to travel and job shadow with field VR counselors and rehab teachers at the Rehab Center (and vice versa) to provide a more personalized experience of how their coworkers support and provide services to individuals with vision loss. This will also allow sighted staff more opportunity to observe work and work alongside non-sighted staff in their work environment.

Goal 5: Strengthen the agency's ability to provide quality services to minority populations in South Dakota.

Strategy 5.1: Provide training opportunities to SBVI staff on culturally relevant service provision and cultural sensitivity.

SBVI created an Inter-Agency Agreement with University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities Oyate Circle to provide a full day of training to all SBVI staff on July 30, 2025. This training focused on fostering cultural understanding and sensitivity in various contexts, especially when working with Native American communities and individuals with disabilities. Participants explored topics including unconscious bias, cultural humility, and respectful communication to improve interactions across cultural divides. The training also addressed the importance of trust-building, understanding cultural norms, and how to navigate differences in disability support and gender roles. Specific attention was given to the unique challenges faced by Native Americans with disabilities, including employment barriers and the role of tribal communities. Additionally, the training delved into respecting cultural traditions, health practices, and addressing the impact of generational trauma to create inclusive, supportive environments for all individuals.

Strategy 5.2: Collaborate with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to ensure that eligible individuals are served in an effective and efficient manner on reservations and tribal lands.

SBVI assigned a VR counselor for each reservation to work directly with the six Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. In 2024, SBVI adjusted county staff coverage at the request of the Standing Rock Tribal VR program to ensure that one counselor covered the entire reservation instead of multiple VR staff covering counties on one reservation.

Tribal vocational rehabilitation programs from around the state were invited to present and participate in the SBVI All Staff training July 29-31, 2025. The tribal VR programs that participated included staff from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Oglala Sioux Tribal VR programs. They attended many of the presentations offered during the training and took opportunity to network with staff during breaks. After the training, they were invited to a tour of the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, where they experienced hands-on training in skills of blindness and examples of assistive technology and low vision devices that many individuals with vision loss use.

SBVI VR met with Tribal VR staff on the Oglala Lakota Reservation to meet with clients and community resources and to familiarize newer SBVI staff with the territory. Tribal VR introduced SBVI staff to agencies they will need to become familiar with, including the Tribal VR office, Oglala SSI Office, Oglala Transit Office, Oglala Sioux Housing, and Oglala Sioux Tribe Human Resources. Traveling with Tribal VR created an opportunity to establish relationships and make professional connections.

Strategy 5.3: Inform minority populations of vocational rehabilitation services and the role of SBVI to meet the needs of those who are blind or visually impaired in these populations.

Participation in a Rotary meeting with the Employment Disability Resources Executive Director with a panel focused on stories from first-generation American business owners in Sioux Falls and some of the challenges and successes that they had.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff conducted a hands-on tour and training for eight staff from Union Gospel Mission, demonstrating Center services and safe guiding practices. The visit strengthened community partnerships and increased the Mission's ability to refer and support individuals with visual impairments.

Rehabilitation Center staff delivered four training sessions for Sioux Falls Transit staff on disability etiquette and proper sighted guide techniques. About 120 staff participated across sessions, improving community transportation accessibility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

To inform minority populations and individuals, the SBVI website is fully accessible; in addition, the public can contact SBVI staff to obtain materials in any needed format or language. Forms such as applications, Individual Plans for Employment and other documents are printed in alternate languages. SBVI utilizes foreign language interpreters to provide communication between VR staff and individuals applying/receiving services. The Division also utilizes Language Line service that translate communication and documents. Braille and large print copies are available upon request.

Goal 6: Improve coordination of services to facilitate the transition of students from high school to post-secondary education and/or training in preparation for employment.

Strategy 6.1: Increase the number of potentially eligible students referred by SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Consultants and Vision Transition Specialist.

SBVI has 14 Potentially Eligible cases that were referred by the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired between the ages of 16-19 years of age, a decrease from 20 students in 2024. An additional ten students were referred to SBVI from public and tribal schools. It was also noted that School for the Blind was not properly documenting the newer students they have had referred to them from local school districts in South Dakota. This documentation is in the process of being corrected so moving forward SBVI can more accurately track referrals from School for the Blind outreach consultants to the School for the Blind transition specialist. Long-term turnover of an outreach consultant in one region of the state created a lack of service, communication and referrals to SBVI. A new outreach consultant has just been hired, and partnerships are being developed with local VR counselors.

Strategy 6.2: Increase the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with visual impairments through outreach to public and Tribal schools across South Dakota.

This year, the VR program has implemented tracking to show how often counselors are providing in-house Pre-ETS services during the year. This change in case management

tracking was implemented in December 2024. SBVI counselors track their outreach to public and tribal schools in their territories, providing brochures and outreach materials, meeting with Spec Ed teachers and guidance counselors to inform them of SBVI services. SBVI also strives to strengthen relationships with SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Consultants, located in communities across the state who work with local education agencies to provide assistance to students with vision loss and blindness.

To build relationships with post-secondary education institutions, VR staff met with Disability Coordinators at South Dakota State University's Office of Student Accessibility; Black Hills State University's Disability Service Office; University of South Dakota Office of Accessibility; and Dakota State University Admissions and Disability Service Offices to partner with them on accessibility for students with vision loss pursuing post-secondary education.

SBVI VR counselors and supervisor traveled to Aberdeen to meet with SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired superintendent and transition specialist, and to tour the school. Counselors came away with a better understanding of the resources available at the school, starting from birth (outreach) to 3 (preschool) through the age of 21, if needed.

Strategy 6.3: Promote participation in transition activities such as Project Skills, Project Search, Youth Leadership Forum, Rehab. Center for the Blind Transition Week, and Employment Skills Training for students who are blind or visually impaired.

SBVI provides a work experience program, Project Skills, for students with disabilities to try various employment options. A student can receive up to 250 hours of paid work experience during a school year and participate in multiple experiences while receiving IEP services through their school district. During Federal Fiscal Year 2024, 10 students with visual disabilities participated in the Project Skills program. These paid work experiences not only teach students with disabilities the skills needed to be successful employees but also allow them to try a variety of employment experiences to determine what type of career they want to pursue.

SBVI supported Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) events by referring students and parents to transition events, such as Let's Talk Work and Catch the College Wave in Watertown, Lake Area Tech, Western Dakota Tech, Southeast Tech, and University of South Dakota. During these events, SBVI provides teachers, students, and family members with information on VR services.

Three SBVI students participated in the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), a five-day event held June 2–6, 2024, on a college campus. YLF provides a unique learning opportunity for forty-two (42) high school students with disabilities, including those from ethnic and racial minority groups. The program helps students explore personal leadership, plan for future careers, develop self-advocacy skills, and expand their knowledge of the services and supports available during the transition from high school to adulthood. SBVI staff took part in the 2025 Youth Leadership Forum, with one counselor working along with TSLP

and other staff supporting the students across several days, and another counselor manning a booth at the event, providing outreach and information to the attendees.

SBVI supports a student in the STRIVE program. STRIVE, offered through Teachwell Solutions in coordination with Southeastern Technical College, allows students to take dual-credit courses that count toward both their high school diploma and an associate degree once they officially enroll in college.

Strategy 6.4: Ensure that families are informed of opportunities for community resources available to assist their youth to transition successfully.

SBVI works closely with families through the participation of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings with potentially eligible and active vocational rehabilitation students. SBVI partners with SD School for the Blind Transition Specialist who works with local school districts and School for the Blind Outreach Consultants to identify students aged 14 and above that could benefit from referral to SBVI VR as a potentially eligible student and offered opportunity to apply for services. VR counselors attend IEP meetings and share information with parents, guardians and school personnel of the beneficial services available to the student to help with their transition to work and post-secondary education.

SBVI counselors share a monthly transition newsletter mailed to students and their families to increase outreach. Every month is a different topic that shares resources and supports available to South Dakota students with disabilities. Topics include job interview tips, ways to build your resume, disability disclosure, independent living, self-advocacy, and more.

- (1) 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

There are six primary indicators of performance under section 116 of WIOA.

Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit).

- The negotiated level agreed upon between RSA and South Dakota for PY 2024 was 61.9%.
- South Dakota's actual level of performance was 61.5%, just below the negotiated level.

Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit).

- The negotiated level agreed upon between RSA and South Dakota for PY 2024 was 56.1%.

- South Dakota’s actual level of performance was 55.3%, slightly below the negotiated level.

Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

- The negotiated level agreed upon between RSA and South Dakota for PY 2024 was \$3,600.
- South Dakota’s actual level of performance was \$3,725.05, exceeding the negotiated level.

Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training and customized training) who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program.

- The negotiated level agreed upon between RSA and South Dakota for PY 2024 was 34.5%.
- South Dakota’s actual level of performance was 43.6%, exceeding the negotiated level. Previous lower rates were largely due to over-enrollment issues and an improved understanding of “once enrolled, always enrolled” concept that has been emphasized in recent trainings. A data sharing agreement with the SD Dept. of Education provides verification and documentation of high school diplomas, which has also had a positive impact on credential attainment rates.

Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.

- The negotiated level agreed upon between RSA and South Dakota for PY 2024 was 50%.
- South Dakota’s actual level of performance was 70.5% of participants who obtained measurable skills gains leading to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment, exceeding the negotiated level.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers: addresses the program’s efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time.

- South Dakota is experiencing an 87% retention rate with wages from the same employer second and fourth quarter after exit. SBVI as a separate blind agency experienced 90% retention rate.

	Retention Yes	Retention No	Total	Retention Rate
DRS	882	129	1,011	87%
SBVI	71	8	79	90%
Total	953	137	1,090	87%

	0.87			
	87%			

(2) 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 Rehabilitation Act requires that a portion of funds be reserved for innovation and expansion activities. The Division of SBVI works with the Board to prioritize these activities. The Board of SBVI utilizes the Division senior secretary for support of Board activities due to the limited resources available for personnel. Activities supported by the Board of SBVI were as follows:

- 1. Costs associated with Board Member attendance at quarterly meetings;**
- 2. Public Meeting promotion and facilitation (to gather input on the need to expand services, especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities);**
- 3. Client Satisfaction Surveys;**
- 4. Joint activities with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council;**
- 5. National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities;**
- 6. Workshop registration and travel expenses for Board Members attendance at agency training, Board supported activities, and client conventions;**
- 7. Education and outreach to promote the capabilities of citizens with vision loss and services offered by SBVI;**
- 8. Workshop registration and travel expenses for clients' attendance at state conventions of client organizations;**
- 9. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment consultant services;**
- 10. Governors Awards recognizing employment of people with disabilities;**
- 11. Other activities approved by the Board of SBVI to address agency goals and strategies.**

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired budgets approximately \$18,767 annually for strategic planning, board member supports, and innovation and expansion activities for the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Board members participate in prioritizing innovation and expansion activities impacting citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Innovation and expansion funds are used in accordance with priorities in the Rehabilitation Act as amended.

(e) Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

(1) Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

(B) [X] VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

(2) If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of title VI funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

N/A as South Dakota Blind does not receive Supported Employment funds.

(3) Supported employment services may be provided with title I 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.

SBVI does not receive Supported Employment funds, however, those services are still provided to individuals and youth with the most significant disabilities using RSA 110 grant funds. Supported employment services are defined as job maintenance services provided to people who have significant limitations with multiple impairments who require a high level of support (job training, assistance building natural supports, job coaching, etc.) to maintain successful competitive integrated employment in the community. These supported employment services can last up to 24 months (or 48 months for youth), or longer if a VR counselor and the client jointly agree to an exception to extend that time. Once supported employment services lead to job stabilization, the individual or youth with significant disabilities may be transitioned to extended services. SBVI provides extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of time not to exceed four years, or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of youth with a disability, whichever occurs first.

The Division of SBVI in conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services has implemented a number of activities to improve the quality and extent of supported employment services including contracting with Griffin-Hammis to provide training and facilitate monthly community of practice sessions for employment service providers. These monthly trainings are also open to other provider types throughout the state (IL, DD, Mental Health, etc) to help increase awareness about disability in general, the importance of work to an individual's self-confidence and overall well-being, and to educate about employment options and services available through Vocational Rehabilitation. Training on Customized Employment and training to help prepare for CESP certification is also offered through Griffin-Hammis annually to increase the skills and capacity of employment service providers in South Dakota to ensure that they are well educated on how to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities.

SBVI clients are benefiting from the expertise and training that has been provided to the employment service providers who provide supported employment services to individuals who are blind or have vision loss with most significant disabilities. Additionally, the vocational rehabilitation programs in South

Dakota have implemented the Transition to Extended Services (TES) incentive paid out to providers of long-term funding when employment services are added to individual's service plans to ensure that needed services started by the vocational rehabilitation program are continued by the person's long-term funding provider. This combination of services has helped to increase the capacity of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities under supported employment in South Dakota.

(4) Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR 363.4(a) and 34 CFR 361.5(c)(19)(v).

The Department of Human Services Divisions of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Division of Rehabilitation Services and Division of Developmental Disabilities revised our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 7/1/2022 to address the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities. This MOU improved the provision of extended services between our agencies. The vocational rehabilitation agencies added a new fee rate when the transition to extended services occurs with the long-term support agency. With the addition of Customized Employment as an available service, this will better serve youth that may not have been well-served by more traditional services.

SBVI provides supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities, including VR funded extended services for youth in accordance with requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 361 and part 363 for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever occurs first.

Medicaid waiver funds are also available for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities through the public-school system and Medicaid waiver services.

(f) Annual Estimates. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

(2) Estimates for next Federal fiscal year— **FFY 2027**

(C) VR Program; and

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
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Priority Category I - Most Significantly Disabled	270	270	\$819,811	0
Priority Category II - Significantly Disabled	25	25	\$12,651	0
Priority Category III - Not Significantly Disabled	0	0	0	0

(D) Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Priority Category I - Most Significantly Disabled	12	12	\$73,510	0

(g) Order of Selection.

[X] The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

(1) For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—

(A) The justification for the order;

No order of selection being implemented at this time.

- (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

- (2) Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?

[check box] Yes

[check box] ☒ No

(h) Waiver of Statewideness. The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

Counselors provide services in all areas of the state. RSA suggested the request for waiver of state wideness specifically since some school districts do not participate in Project Skills. The South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) provides work experiences for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) transition age students through Project Skills in conjunction with the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Project Skills is a cooperative arrangement with the local school districts and the state VR agencies. SBVI makes this program available to all schools including 19 Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education schools, 149 public school districts, and 14 Educational Cooperatives. Approximately 145 South Dakota's public, Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education school, and educational cooperatives are currently participating in the program. The program is available to the remaining school districts, but the remaining school districts have chosen not to complete a contract with the South Dakota VR agencies.

Services Provided: Many students with significant disabilities don't have the opportunity to participate in gainful employment while in high school. Although willing, most employers cannot afford to provide the training and supports students frequently require on their first job. Project Skills assists students to build their work history while helping them to move into different and

better jobs as they mature and are ready to take on new challenges. This program is a cooperative arrangement between the State VR Agencies and the local school systems. SBVI pays the wages, workers compensation, and FICA; the schools provide the job development, job coaching, and follow-along services for students at the job site.

Written Assurances: Each school enters into an agreement with SBVI for Project Skills. This agreement requires the school district to provide written assurance that they will use non- federal funds for their share of the Project Skills program as match for the federal funds allocated by SBVI, including funds contributed to the school by a private agency, organization, or individual. The Project Skills program is only available for students who are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

- (1) Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—
 - (A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;
 - (B) The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - (C) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

SBVI continually assesses its personnel needs to ensure service delivery across the state. The table below reflects current staffing levels, current needs, and five-year projections for each personnel category:

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Administrative	5	5	0
VR Counselors	7	7	2
Rehab Center Teachers	5	5	2
Rehab Center Manager	1	1	0

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Rehab Center Program Specialists	2	2	1
Rehab Center Clerical	1	1	0
Rehab Center Counselor	1	1	0

D. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:

In Program Year (PY) 2024, SBVI employed seven VR Counselors, plus one counselor at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind which aligns with the current and projected personnel needs. During this period, SBVI served a total of 383 clients in the VR program and an additional 18 potentially eligible students who received pre-employment transition services. This represents an average caseload ratio of approximately 1:50 per counselor. SBVI monitors caseload distribution, territory coverage, and client satisfaction when vacancies occur to ensure the delivery of quality, individualized services.

E. Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:

Maintaining eight counselors ensures that clients receive timely assessments, individualized plan development, and ongoing case management. Looking ahead, SBVI projects that the current staffing level will remain sufficient over the next five years to serve an anticipated 400 clients and 25 potentially eligible students. Caseload projections consider factors such as ongoing succession planning to address potential turnover or retirements, as well as regional population density and travel requirements.

(2) Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:

(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
South Dakota State University	Masters in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling	14	5

- (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.

SBVI recognizes that the quality and effectiveness of VR services depend directly on the skills, commitment, and diversity of its workforce. SBVI actively recruits individuals with educational backgrounds in rehabilitation counseling, special education, psychology, social work, and other human service disciplines. Job announcements highlight the agency's mission and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with vision loss. Recruitment efforts are conducted through the State of South Dakota employment website, professional networks, social media platforms including LinkedIn, Facebook, Indeed, and Google Ads, and university career centers.

SBVI's recruitment network extends throughout Region VIII, including the University of Colorado, Montana State University, South Dakota State University, and Utah State University, each offering master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling or closely related fields. Within South Dakota, the University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University, and Northern State University also offer master's-level counseling programs that provide flexible options for distance learning and satellite coursework. Graduates from these and related programs, such as clinical mental health counseling, school and educational psychology, and counseling practice, are actively recruited and supported by SBVI to pursue the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential, ensuring the highest level of professional qualification among the agency's rehabilitation counseling staff.

The Division partners with minority-serving and disability advocacy organizations to expand outreach and encourage applications from individuals who reflect the diversity of the communities SBVI serves. The South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration (BHRA) ensures that individuals with disabilities who are certified as severely disabled are automatically granted interview eligibility for state positions, regardless of applicant ranking, reinforcing equitable access to employment opportunities within SBVI.

Partnerships with institutions of higher education are central to SBVI's preparation strategy. The Division collaborates with universities to offer internships, practicums, and field placements in VR settings, providing students with exposure to blindness rehabilitation and creating a pipeline of qualified candidates familiar with SBVI's mission. SBVI also provides consultation to faculty and serves as a practicum site for students pursuing degrees in rehabilitation counseling, ensuring alignment between academic preparation and real-world service needs.

New employees participate in a structured orientation introducing agency policies, case management procedures, and foundational practices in vocational rehabilitation. A key component of this orientation is a two-week skills-of-blindness immersion training, during which staff actively engage in blindness techniques and simulations to deepen their understanding of the lived experience of clients. New employees temporarily reside in agency-provided apartments, the same housing used by program participants at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, allowing staff to experience daily living and work-related activities under nonvisual conditions. This intensive, experiential approach provides practical insight into the adaptive methods and technologies

used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The immersion training is also available for refresher participation as needed and serves as a foundation for empathy, strengthens problem-solving skills, and enhances each staff member's ability to develop realistic, individualized rehabilitation plans that promote independence and employment success.

Retention and career development are essential components of SBVI's personnel strategy. All entry-level counselors are offered the opportunity to pursue a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling through Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Long-Term Training Grants. Upon completion of their degree and attainment of CRC certification, counselors are eligible for promotion to Senior Counselor, which provides higher compensation, greater independence, and leadership opportunities.

Supervisors work with staff to establish individualized professional development plans that outline training goals, skill-building priorities, and career advancement pathways. Regular check-ins and performance discussions support ongoing feedback, professional growth, and employee engagement. SBVI offers leadership and management training to prepare Senior Counselors for supervisory or administrative roles, ensuring succession planning for critical positions.

Retention is further supported through flexible work arrangements, recognition programs, and a positive organizational culture emphasizing employee well-being. Staff have access to employee assistance programs, professional memberships, and opportunities to attend conferences and continuing education events.

SBVI maintains active collaboration with South Dakota State University's Master's in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program, which is CACREP-accredited, as well as with other universities throughout Region VIII. These partnerships include shared planning to align curricula with workforce needs, placement of interns and practicum students, and participation in classroom and career events to promote VR as a career path.

The Division also engages with professional associations such as the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). Participation in these organizations provides access to certification programs, continuing education, and national best practices that strengthen staff competency.

SBVI continually evaluates workforce needs through analysis of retirements, turnover patterns, and projected caseloads. These data inform recruitment strategies, training priorities, and long-term staffing projections. By aligning personnel planning with anticipated service demands, SBVI ensures that a sufficient number of qualified staff are available to provide high-quality, individualized VR services statewide.

- (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.

SBVI prioritizes the development of a knowledgeable, skilled, and adaptable workforce. Staff development is designed to ensure that all employees receive the training and support necessary to provide effective services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The agency's training framework is proactive, collaborative, and responsive to emerging practices in rehabilitation and assistive technology.

SBVI staff have the opportunity to participate in refresher and advanced skills-of-blindness training to reinforce foundational practices and explore emerging tools in the field of vision rehabilitation. These sessions, held at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, provide immersive, hands-on learning experiences under nonvisual conditions. Training emphasizes the exploration and application of new assistive technologies, adaptive strategies, and innovative instructional techniques that promote independence and successful employment outcomes for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This continued learning experience allows staff to remain proficient in traditional blindness skills while staying informed about advancements in rehabilitation technology and service delivery.

SBVI emphasizes continuous professional growth in core competency areas, including assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology. Training in these areas is delivered through webinars, mentoring, peer-to-peer learning, and collaborative initiatives with the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Joint training strengthens statewide capacity in comprehensive assessment, counseling techniques, job development, and information and referral to comparable benefits.

Each year, SBVI hosts an Annual All-Staff Training, bringing together the entire agency for intensive learning focused on federal and state initiatives, cultural responsiveness, blindness-specific practices, and innovative service delivery. The state's Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and other partners are invited to participate, promoting mutual learning and culturally informed service approaches. In addition, staff engage in monthly training sessions addressing policy updates, case management practices, and emerging best practices. A Policy-of-the-Month spotlight reinforces complex or high-priority policies through discussion and practical application.

Given the central role of technology in vocational rehabilitation, SBVI collaborates closely with DakotaLink, South Dakota's Assistive Technology Act program. This partnership provides staff with ongoing instruction on new devices and applications and facilitates client referrals for specialized assessments and training. SBVI also coordinates training activities with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, Centers for Independent Living, the Client Assistance Program, and Community Rehabilitation Programs to ensure statewide consistency and quality of service.

Staff participate in training opportunities offered by partners such as the Department of Labor and Regulation, the Office of Special Education, the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration, Parent Connection, and consumer and professional organizations including the South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB), National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota (NFB), Community Support Providers of South Dakota, National Alliance on Mental Illness South Dakota, the South Dakota Association of the Deaf, and the Helen Keller National Center for Deafblind Youths and Adults. These collaborations ensure that training content reflects current best practices, specialized expertise, and the diverse needs of the communities served.

SBVI maintains a structured process for acquiring and sharing significant knowledge from research, technical assistance centers, and other sources. Staff are encouraged to attend regional and national conferences such as those hosted by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB), and the Association for Education and Rehabilitation (AER) of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Information from these events, along with updates from the Rehabilitation Services Administration and other federal agencies, is summarized and distributed through agency-wide meetings, email newsletters, and staff briefings.

The VR Supervisor and Quality Assurance Program Specialist play active roles in reinforcing new learning through supervision, coaching, and performance development reviews. Training materials and recorded sessions are archived in an accessible online learning library, allowing employees to revisit topics as needed. Staff also have access to a learning management system that provides self-paced and instructor-led courses, including pre-approved continuing education options through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

SBVI utilizes a variety of national technical assistance resources to enhance training content and professional competency, including:

- American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC)
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C)
- Older Individuals Who Are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)
- National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM), which provides access to current research and continuing education resources

Training needs are identified through staff development plans, supervisory evaluations, agency performance data, and feedback from the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This continuous feedback loop ensures that professional development remains aligned with agency goals, WIOA priorities, and the evolving needs of individuals served.

Through structured orientation, ongoing statewide training, interagency collaboration, and systematic dissemination of research and best practices, SBVI ensures its workforce remains prepared to deliver high-quality, person-centered VR services. This commitment to professional development strengthens staff expertise and directly enhances outcomes for South Dakotans who are blind or visually impaired.

(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.

SBVI is committed to maintaining personnel standards that ensure professional and paraprofessional staff are adequately trained, prepared, and qualified to deliver high-quality vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. Agency policies reflect the requirements of Section 101(a)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, emphasizing national and state-recognized qualifications, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in today's workforce.

SBVI aligns its personnel standards with state-approved classification and qualification systems administered through the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration (BHRA). Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are required to hold a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field, consistent with nationally recognized standards for VR practice. Paraprofessional positions, including rehabilitation teachers and support specialists, must meet education and experience requirements established by the state classification system to ensure consistency with professional expectations.

When certification or licensure applies to a position, SBVI requires compliance with those external requirements. For example, orientation and mobility specialists and rehabilitation teachers are expected to obtain certifications recognized by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) or other nationally accepted accrediting bodies. SBVI supports staff in pursuing and maintaining such certifications by providing access to continuing education and training opportunities that satisfy renewal standards.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

South Dakota does not have a state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, or registration requirement for any of the personnel classifications, including vocational rehabilitation counselors. Individuals hired as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must meet the requirements of 34 CFR §361.18 (c)(ii)

(A)(1) Attainment of a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, to indicate a level of competency and skill demonstrating basic preparation in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment,

customized employment, economics, or another field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with consumers and employers; and

(2) Demonstrated paid or unpaid experience, for not less than one year, consisting of—

(i) Direct work with individuals with disabilities in a setting such as an independent living center;

(ii) Direct service or advocacy activities that provide such individual with experience and skills in working with individuals with disabilities; or

(iii) Direct experience in competitive integrated employment environments as an employer, as a small business owner or operator, or in self-employment, or other experience in human resources or recruitment, or experience in supervising employees, training, or other activities; or

(B) Attainment of a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector, in a disability field, or in both business-related and rehabilitation-related fields; and

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are approved to sign all case work documents. Individual Plans for Employment will require a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Signature.

Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

A Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a higher classification and pay grade. A Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will meet the requirements of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor but also have obtained/maintained certification of a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). A Senior VR Counselor has all the job functions of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and can independently sign off on Individual Plans for Employment. As of July 1, 2025, seven employees meet the qualifications of Senior VR Counselors and hold current CRC credentials.

SBVI is dedicated to supporting counselors and other staff in obtaining the academic training and professional experience necessary to meet the standards of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. During Program Year 2024, four employees were enrolled in the Vocational Rehabilitation master's degree program at South Dakota State University, and one individual successfully completed the program and earned certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC).

In addition to CRC achievement, several SBVI staff have pursued advanced professional certifications that strengthen the agency's collective expertise. The South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Manager earned certification as a Certified Low Vision Therapist (CLVT), enhancing the agency's capacity to provide specialized low-vision assessment and training. One staff member obtained certification as a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP), and another earned the designation of Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist (CVE). One staff member completed academic coursework required for certification as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) and is preparing to take the certification exam. Another staff member completed one year of coursework toward becoming a Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist for

Individuals with Visual Impairments (CATIS) and intends to continue progressing toward certification. These accomplishments reflect SBVI’s commitment to supporting professional growth and expanding specialized skills across all service areas.

Personnel development is guided by a coordinated system that includes tracking education levels, training completion, and professional growth goals. Supervisors assess short- and long-term training needs annually through the state’s Continuous Performance Communication (CPC) process. The CPC system is a structured performance management process that promotes ongoing communication between employees and supervisors. It includes periodic check-ins and a year-end appraisal, during which progress toward professional goals, training needs, and performance expectations are reviewed.

The CPC system allows for consistent feedback and evaluation, encouraging both employee self-assessment and supervisor input regarding professionalism, work quality, and areas for improvement. Training needs are documented using standardized forms that include fields for identifying topics, scheduling dates, and confirming completion. The Bureau of Human Resources and Administration offers workshops organized under supervisory, job enrichment, and technology categories, with additional options for job-specific skills and professional development.

The Quality Assurance Program Specialist collaborates with the VR Supervisor to identify resources and coordinate training in key areas such as vocational rehabilitation service delivery, WIOA and Rehabilitation Act amendments, RSA regulations, and strategies for serving individuals with vision disabilities. Training needs are also informed by client satisfaction survey results and recommendations from the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, ensuring that professional growth remains responsive to service outcomes and stakeholder input.

Through clearly defined personnel standards, credential-based qualifications, and structured performance development, SBVI ensures that its workforce maintains a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the changing needs of individuals with disabilities. This ongoing commitment to maintaining high personnel standards supports consistent, effective, and person-centered vocational rehabilitation service delivery across South Dakota.

- (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.

SBVI ensures that all personnel are able to communicate effectively with applicants and eligible individuals in modes of communication that are accessible and appropriate to their needs. The agency is committed to eliminating barriers to communication for individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, or have limited English proficiency.

SBVI utilizes qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters who are available for training sessions and services involving clients who are deaf or deaf-blind. The Division maintains fee schedules and established vendor agreements to ensure timely access to interpreters for both foreign languages and Native American languages.

To support individuals with limited English proficiency, SBVI contracts with professional interpreting services to provide in-person foreign language interpretation for meetings, assessments, and other direct service interactions. In addition, SBVI purchases language services through vendors such as Linguistica and Interpretalk, which provide over-the-phone interpretation on demand. These combined in-person and remote options ensure that communication occurs efficiently and effectively regardless of the client's primary language, preferred communication method, or location within the state.

SBVI also provides materials in alternative formats for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or have other print disabilities. Documents and training materials are available in Braille, electronic text, and enlarged print upon request for both staff and clients. In addition, the South Dakota Department of Human Services maintains a fully accessible website, ensuring that program information, forms, and resources are available to all individuals using assistive technology.

Through these coordinated methods, SBVI maintains its commitment to ensuring that communication is accessible, accurate, and respectful of the diverse communication needs of the individuals it serves.

- (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.

SBVI works closely with the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI) and other education and workforce partners to address the needs of transition-age students with vision loss on a statewide basis. This coordination is managed through an interagency agreement between SBVI and SDSBVI, which establishes a Vision Transition Specialist position. The Vision Transition Specialist serves as a liaison between Vision Outreach Consultants who provide services to students with vision loss in local school districts and VR counselors who deliver pre-employment transition services to students who are potentially eligible for, or already receiving, VR services.

Training related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and transition services for students with disabilities is coordinated jointly with the South Dakota Department of Education's Special Education Program and the Transition Services Liaison Project, and the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. These partnerships promote consistent practices and ensure that educators, rehabilitation professionals, and families have a shared understanding of transition processes and service coordination.

SBVI actively collaborates with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Labor and Regulation, and the Statewide Independent Living Council to deliver joint training, outreach, and transition events. The annual Youth Leadership Forum is planned in partnership with the Special Education Program, the Transition Services Liaison Project, and other agencies, offering students with disabilities the opportunity to develop leadership skills, learn about employment and post-secondary options, and engage with mentors who have disabilities.

Additionally, the annual Fall Conference represents a collaborative effort among the Department of Education, the Special Education Program, the Department of Labor and Regulation, Division of Rehabilitation Services and SBVI to provide training sessions on transition planning, employment, independent living, and pre-employment transition service options. These coordinated activities ensure

that transition-age youth who are blind or visually impaired receive comprehensive support as they prepare for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act)

(i) 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.

South Dakota has a cooperative agreement concerning transition services for students with disabilities which was revised in October 2022. This agreement includes the following South Dakota entities: Office of Special Education, Division of Workforce and Technical Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Labor & Regulation, Division of Behavioral Health, and Division of Child Protection Services. The agreement was created to operationalize South Dakota's transition process, Local Educational Agencies and Adult Services Agencies who are part of this agreement, will coordinate transition services for students and youth with disabilities. Coordination maximizes existing resources and funding responsibilities, thus avoiding duplication, and promoting continuity of service provision. This coordination is important as it assures compliance with providing required services as well as compliance with federal and state laws. The cooperating agencies will also encourage staff to take part in training sponsored by the other cooperating agencies to ensure that services are provided by qualified and appropriately certified staff.

The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities according to the students' ages for the following services:

- a. Consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;**
 - b. Transition planning by personnel of the SBVI and school district personnel;**
 - c. Roles and responsibilities of each agency including State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;**
 - d. Financial responsibilities; and**
 - e. Procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.**
- (2) Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 CFR 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:
 - (A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in

planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

The Transition Cooperative Agreement and conceptual framework will be implemented throughout the state, and continuing evaluation of its effectiveness will provide further direction to the participating state agencies. Based on feedback, the collaborating state agencies will revisit the agreement on an annual basis. They will also provide coordination, technical assistance, and training necessary for implementation.

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI) Interagency Agreement: This agreement was implemented to coordinate efforts to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired receive effective, seamless services as they make the transition from school to adult life and employment. The agreement specifies roles and responsibilities including:

- **Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;**
- **The role for transition planning by personnel of SBVI and SDSBVI and local school districts that facilitate the development and completion of individualized education programs and individual plans for employment;**
- **Roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of each agency and determination of state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and**
- **Procedures for outreach to students who are blind or visually impaired who need transition services.**

The cooperative agreement stipulates that SBVI and the SDSBVI will provide a full-time staff person who is committed to working with students who are blind or visually impaired on a statewide basis. This staff person provides technical assistance to educational agencies as the students move from school settings to post-secondary or other settings.

Students served by SDSBVI reside both at the residential school in Aberdeen, as well as, in school districts on a statewide basis. Outreach Consultants employed by SDSBVI work with students who are blind or visually impaired in the public-school system.

SBVI and SDSBVI share information with students, parents, and local school districts about the importance of the skills of blindness to the success of students in the world of work. SBVI is an active participant in the transition planning process and counselors become involved with students as early as age 14. For those students enrolled at SDSBVI, SBVI Counselors will attend pre-staffing meetings when appropriate. SBVI helps to determine appropriate vocational direction by providing work experiences and vocational counseling and guidance along with pre-employment transition services.

SDSBVI has responsibility for all South Dakota students with visual impairments under the age of twenty-one. For students of "transition age" between 14 and 21, that responsibility is shared with SBVI. Blind or visually impaired students residing in school districts that are unwilling to

participate in project skills agreements are sometimes served through the SDSBVI transition specialist to participate in paid work experiences.

Both SBVI and SDSBVI personnel are involved in transition services and regularly discuss mutual efforts and plan appropriate activities to benefit students and family members. Sharing of information takes place due to coordinated efforts between the Board of SBVI and the SD School for the Blind Advisory Council. Summer programs are coordinated to allow students to benefit from both SBVI and SDSBVI activities, and students are encouraged to participate in the Youth Leadership Forum, which is a week-long seminar to prepare high school age youth to be community leaders and self-advocates. All entities have been involved in planning the program, interviewing students, interviewing project staff and funding program activities.

- (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;

The cooperating agencies agree that a transition plan, as a component of the Individual Education Program (IEP), will be initiated for every student with a disability age 16 and older or at a younger age as determined by the Local Education Agency. To the extent possible, the IEP will be integrated into the planning documents of all coordinating agencies, and where possible, eliminates duplication of such plans and services. The IEP will outline all transition services necessary to successfully transition to the next environment or service delivery system and have access to appropriate independent living options in integrated community-based settings.

The following activities are implemented by mutual involvement of SBVI and educational agencies as part of student's IEPs and IPEs:

- **Project Skills:** Project Skills is a paid work-based learning experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps to build the student's work history and references and assists them with experiencing different career fields as they mature and take on new challenges.
- **Project SEARCH:** Project Search is a business led program. This means that students learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the business and those businesses are active partners, participating without subsidies. Project SEARCH is a national model partnering with a large employer, local school district and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. South Dakota currently has four Project Search sites.
- **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF):** YLF is a unique career and leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors to learn more about self-advocacy skills and disability awareness. Students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this annual five-day event that takes place on a college campus.

- **Catch the Wave:** A one day conference designed specifically for high school students who have a disability and are considering post-secondary education (either college or technical institutes). Students learn about preparing for college life, securing appropriate accommodations, and developing self-advocacy and communication skills.
- **Regional Transition Forums:** These forums are informal, interactive meetings for providers of services, transition age students with disabilities, as well as educators and family members.
- **Post-secondary Disability Coordinators Forum:** This forum is held annually, with the most recent meeting held in Mitchell, SD on May 10, 2023, with Disability Coordinators from South Dakota post-secondary programs invited to attend. The forum has been a very successful initiative for promoting transition services for students with disabilities and improving collaboration and referrals between the vocational rehabilitation programs and post-secondary institutions in South Dakota.
- **Summer Institute:** The Summer Institute is an annual statewide training opportunity for Special Education teachers who are assisting students in the transition process. It was held July 11-12, 2023, in Chamberlain, SD and offers training that addresses IDEA, Vocational Rehabilitation and introduces self-determination curriculum and other assessment materials, along with IEP planning for transition service provision. Teachers receive graduate credit for the class and gain knowledge from Disability Services Coordinators from post-secondary schools, vocational rehabilitation counselors, Transition Liaisons, community mental health agencies and independent living services staff.
- **SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) Transition Week:** SDRC hosted Transition Week June 11-15, 2023, for high school juniors and seniors who are blind or visually impaired from around the state. Students participate in skills training in the traditional SDRC training areas. Students are also offered the opportunity to job shadow at a variety of job sites, based on their individual interests. A person-centered approach assists them to experience self-exploration and self-advocacy skills. They also experience dorm life while staying at a university dormitory. Tours and presentations from university staff help give them a better understanding of what to expect from post-secondary education after high school.

- (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;

Cooperative Agreement: Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities South Dakota's human service agencies and education system have forged a strong coalition to implement several pre-employment transition activities and transition services to prepare students with disabilities for post school activities that lead to successful employment outcomes. The South Dakota Cooperative Agreement Concerning Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities was revised effective October 2022. The following South Dakota entities are included in the cooperative agreement:

- Special Education programs and Division of Career & Technical Education within the

- Department of Education;
- Division of Workforce and Career Preparation within the Department of Labor and Regulation;
- Divisions of Behavioral Health and Child Protection Services within the Department of Social Services; and
- Divisions of Developmental Disabilities, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired within the Department of Human Services.

The agreement identifies each agency's roles and responsibilities including: Consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post school activities, including vocation rehabilitation services; transition planning by Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired counselors and school district personnel; roles and responsibilities of each agency including state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; financial responsibilities; and procedures for outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need pre-employment transition services and transition services.

The agreement presents guiding principles and conceptual framework for addressing interagency transition planning at the local level, thus ensuring that youth with disabilities have access to the services and resources needed to enter adult life (and employment) successfully. Cooperating agencies will benefit from maximum coordination of services, more efficient utilization of agency resources, increased service options, and improved interagency communication. The collaborating agencies promote and enhance the following principles:

- 1) A transition plan, as a component of the Individual Education Program (IEP), is initiated for every student with a disability age 16 and older or at a younger age as determined by the Local Education Agency (LEA) IEP team. To the extent possible, the IEP will be integrated into the planning documents of all coordinating agencies, and where possible, eliminates duplication of such plans. The IEP will outline all transition services necessary to successfully transition to the next environment or service delivery system and have access to appropriate independent living options in integrated community-based settings.
- 2) All students with disabilities have access to a life skills curriculum and independent living services designed to prepare them to live and function in domestic, recreational, social, community, and vocational environments.
- 3) All students with disabilities have access to a self-determination curriculum and training to develop self-awareness and prepare them to fully participate in transition planning and to make informed choices on the continuation of community services and supports.
- 4) All work and learning opportunities offered will be designed to meet the unique needs of the student commensurate with the individual's level of ability, interest, and informed choice and should be expected to change over time (i.e., career ladder opportunities).
- 5) All students with disabilities will be prepared for and offered "integrated" work settings for "competitive" wages or prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education or training with access to necessary support services. Additionally, all work opportunities will be geared to employer/industry needs.

The agreement will be reviewed by all agencies annually to ensure alignment with WIOA.

- 6) 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;

SBVI has a brochure to promote transition services and pre-employment transition services for students with vision loss to school personnel, students, parents, and other entities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors distribute the brochure to all schools in their territories on an annual basis and meet with school personnel to discuss transition services for students with vision loss.

Interagency agreement between SBVI and the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI): This agreement was implemented to coordinate efforts to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired receive effective, seamless services as they make the transition from school to adult life and employment. The agreement specifies roles and responsibilities including:

- **Outreach by SDSBVI and SBVI personnel to identify students with vision loss who can benefit from transition services;**
- **Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies to plan for transition of students with disabilities from school to post school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;**
- **The role for transition planning by personnel of SBVI and SDSBVI and local school districts that facilitate the development and completion of individualized education programs;**
- **Roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of each agency and determination of state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and**
- **Procedures for outreach to and identification of students who are blind or visually impaired who need transition services.**

SBVI and SDSBVI share information with students, parents, and local school districts about the importance of the skills of blindness to the success of students in the world of work. SBVI is an active participant in the transition planning process and counselors become involved with students as early as age 14. For those students enrolled at SDSBVI, SBVI representatives will also attend pre-staffing meetings when appropriate. SBVI helps to determine appropriate vocational direction by providing work experiences and vocational counseling and guidance along with pre-employment transition services. The agreement clearly stipulates that SBVI will attempt to have an IPE in place for every eligible student prior to graduation.

SDSBVI has a responsibility to all South Dakota students with visual impairments under the age of twenty-one. For students of "transition age" between 14 and 21, that responsibility is shared with SBVI. SDSBVI employs a transition specialist through a cooperative agreement with SBVI and has outreach consultants that work with students, families, schools, and SBVI staff on a statewide basis.

SBVI also participates in an agreement for the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) which provides additional technical assistance and training to students with disabilities, families, local education agencies and adult service agencies. The agreement also includes the Office of Special Education and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The TSLP liaisons are trained professionals who collaborate to

perform transition planning and provide the consultation necessary to promote a smooth transition for students from the educational setting to enter or prepare for employment.

- 7) 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

Per the Transition Cooperative Agreement, South Dakota VR, in consultation with the Local Education Agencies (LEA), will continue utilizing the process of documentation of this process consistent with the confidentiality requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 USC 11232g(b) and 34 CFR§99.30 and 99.31) and 34 CFR 300.622) pursuant to section 511(d) of the Act and §397.10. This documentation must contain, at a minimum (§397.10(a)(1)):

- **Youth's name;**
- **Determination made, including a summary of the reason for the determination or a description of the activity or service completed;**
- **Name of individual making the determination or the provider of the service/activity;**
- **Date determination was made, or the required service or activity completed;**
- **Applicable signatures and dates by the South Dakota VR Agency or LEA making determination or completion of the required services or activity;**
- **Signature of the South Dakota VR Agency personnel transmitting documentation to the youth with a disability;**
- **Date and method by which the document was transmitted to the youth; and**
- **South Dakota VR Agency and LEA must retain copies of the documentation in a manner consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.333.**

- 8) 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.

Per the Transition Cooperative Agreement, language is included that prohibits schools from contracting or arranging employment opportunities with subminimum wage providers. The transition agreement also details the necessary steps individuals with disabilities who are 24 years of age or younger must complete including participating in Pre-ETS under the Rehabilitation Act and transition services under IDEA, are found eligible for VR services with an approved IPE while receiving career counseling and information about available services to programs that could assist with competitive, integrated employment.

(k) Coordination with Employers. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

Outreach: SBVI conducts outreach to employers through a variety of approaches. A fact sheet has been developed as a quick reference regarding SBVI services. Staff initiate contacts with businesses to promote hiring people with vision loss and serve as resources on accommodations.

Staff participate in Chamber of Commerce activities and present at service clubs (Lion's, Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.) and other organizations which are key to making connections in rural communities. The SBVI Employment Specialist conducts outreach to serve as a resource to employers who are interested in filling vacancies.

Business Led non-profits: There are two business led non-profit entities in South Dakota that offer supports to the business community. Employment Disability Resources (EDR) in Sioux Falls and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills in Rapid City provide education, consulting, and technical assistance to businesses on the hiring, accommodations, supports and retention when employing people with disabilities. The manager of the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (in the Division of SBVI) is on the governing board for the EDR. The Workforce Development Council representative on the Board of SBVI brings the employer/business perspective to strategic planning and Board activities.

Business Organization Involvement: The Division supports memberships and regular involvement of staff to connect with employers. Some examples of the organizations include: local Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. These opportunities support connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and technical assistance and training opportunities.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP): The SBVI Business Enterprise Program supports snack shop, cafeterias and vending opportunities for citizens who are blind. In addition to federal sites, the BEP operates in all state office buildings in the state capitol of Pierre. The BEP is partially supported by income from interstate vending through an agreement with the South Dakota Department of Transportation. Blind vendors and the SBVI BEP manager interact with businesses and employers to promote program expansion and to sustain existing operations.

Transition Services/Pre-employment Transition Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities

The Division of Service to the Blind Partners with the Division of Rehabilitation Services on a number of initiatives that support partnerships with employers for the provision of transition services and pre-employment transition for youth and students with disabilities including:

Project Skills: Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies, employers, and local school districts which provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job settings, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills helps build the student's work history, references, and assists them to experience a variety of career fields based on their interests. Vocational rehabilitation counselors and school staff identify employment sites to match the areas in which students have expressed an interest in working.

Project Search: Project SEARCH is a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities. Students who want to work have the chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The goal of the Project SEARCH program is competitive employment for each intern experience. Designed as an internship program, Project SEARCH affords students

the opportunity to put employability skills into practice. South Dakota currently has 5 Project SEARCH initiatives in Aberdeen, Brookings, Sioux Falls (Teachwell Education Cooperative), Sioux Falls School District, and Rapid City/Sturgis. Another Project SEARCH initiative is scheduled to start in Yankton at the beginning of 2024.

Summer Pre-ETS Initiatives: In cooperation with DRS, SBVI offers funding to entities during the summertime for training opportunities that address Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. Activities that are funded focus primarily on the following Pre-ETS areas: Job exploration activities; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; instruction in self-advocacy; post-secondary training/college exploration, preparation, and planning services; and information about vocational rehabilitation services and other programs available to assist individuals with disabilities.

Let's Talk Work Events: This is a one-day conference that gives students with disabilities a chance to prepare for their next phase of life after high school. More specifically, the events focus on employment soft skills and supports available for best chances of success. Events are held throughout the states, which include insights from employers who participate on panels and presentations to students who attend.

Transition Week at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind: Students with vision loss attend transition week at the Rehab. Center to learn skills and explore options for life after high school. Job exploration activities include tours of businesses in the student's areas of interest, employer panels, and other career exploration opportunities based on the student's interests.

(I) 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 Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has an agreement in place with Western River Foundation/Dakota Link for the implementation of assistive technology services in South Dakota. Services are provided on a fee for service basis; assistive technology services and devices are consistently one of the top case service expenditures for SBVI.

(2) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

The South Dakota Rural Development State Office is in Huron, SD, with other offices in seven communities around the state (website is: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sd>). We provide information about their services of loans, development grants, and housing to VR clients who may benefit from their programs/services.

(3) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has no agreements with non-

educational agencies to serve out-of-school youth.

(4) State use contracting programs;

South Dakota does not have any State Use laws or contracts.

(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 Department of Social Services (DSS) is the state's Medicaid Agency. DHS has the following agreements with the DSS Medicaid Agency.

- **Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation as well as Guardianship and Conservatorship:** An agreement is in place assure each agency's response to meet the needs of persons who are at risk for abuse, neglect and exploitation or in need of guardianship and/or conservatorship services.
- **Money Follows the Person:** This agreement was implemented for the Money Follows the Person initiative involving persons eligible for waiver services.
- **Medicaid Fraud Control:** This agreement was implemented for the purpose of defining mutual responsibilities in the Medicaid Program to ensure maximum efficiency and benefit to the State and to minimize duplication of effort.
- **Title XIX Medicaid Funding Memorandum of Understanding:** This agreement was implemented for the purpose of defining administrative and fiscal accountability responsibilities.
- **Protected Health Information Memorandum of Understanding:** This agreement implemented policy on restrictions of disclosing protected health information.

(6) State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;

The Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This agency is in the same department as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs allowing regular communication and collaboration between programs.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities updated the Policy Memorandum on July 1, 2022, with the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Policy Memorandum defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated in regard to the time limited and on-going support services. This policy agreement has had a significant impact in changing how services are provided to individuals with the most significant impediments to obtain and maintain their employment.

(7) State agency responsible for providing mental health services;

The Department of Social Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services is the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with mental illness. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place to address coordination of services and funding between the Divisions of Behavioral Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local

Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness:

- **What services can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center,**
- **What services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation, and**
- **Which agency pays for the different services.**

(8) Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system;

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with a large variety of local and state agencies in their local communities, including Chamber of Commerce organizations and Human Resource organizations at the local and state levels.

Other 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 consist of:

Project Skills

These are cooperative agreements with local school districts throughout South Dakota for the provision of transition services. This program provides paid work experiences in student's career areas to help them prepare for adulthood and the world of work.

Project SEARCH

These are cooperative agreements with local Project SEARCH sites in Brookings, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Sturgis locations, with an additional site scheduled to start in Yankton in Fall 2024. This agreement lays out each party's responsibility for the Project SEARCH activities.

School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

SBVI has an agreement in place with the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired for a Vision Transition Specialist. This position serves as a liaison between the educational and vocational rehabilitation systems. Services include assisting with the development of transition plans, coordination of transition services for students with vision loss, technical assistance and consultation and training to youth who are blind or visually impaired.

The Division of SBVI has agreements in place with federal facilities for vendors who operate under the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). In addition, there is an agreement in place with the South Dakota Department of Transportation for proceeds from interstate vending in South Dakota used to support the BEP.

(9) Other private nonprofit organizations.

SBVI works extensively with the community service providers, community mental health centers, and centers for independent living in South Dakota. The Divisions of SBVI and DRS continually work on improving the capacity and quality of services from CRPs. A variety of education and training options are developed to offer the opportunity for CRP staff to become Certified

Employment Support Professionals. SBVI provides blindness specific training to employment support professionals to improve the quality-of-service provision for citizens with vision loss.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA, ⁴ and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
2.	In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit) ⁵ 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 ⁶ , the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations ⁷ , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ⁸ , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations ⁹ , 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;

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 CFR 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 CFR part 363.

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
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 title of State officer below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
1.	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2.	Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140.
3.	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). (e) as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. (j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. (l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A). (m) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.	<p>Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. (e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs. (j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) has developed and will implement, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and (B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and (ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25), and 113). (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.	<p>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.	<p>Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(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.</p>
7.	<p>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</p> <p>(a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(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.</p>

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM

Jobs for Veterans State Grants

(OMB Control Number: 1293-0017)

The Jobs for Veterans' State Grants (JVSG) are mandatory, formula-based staffing grants to States (including DC, PR, VI and Guam). The JVSG is funded annually in accordance with a funding formula defined in the statute (38 U.S.C. 4102A (c) (2) (B) and regulation and operates on a fiscal year (not program year) basis, however, performance metrics are collected and reported quarterly on a Program Year basis (as with the ETA-9002 Series). Currently, VETS JVSG operates on a multi-year grant approval cycle modified and funded annually.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(b)(5) and § 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) makes grant funds available for use in each State to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff. As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2) requires States to submit an application for a grant that contains a State Plan narrative, which includes:

(a) 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).

- (1) **A walkthrough of how eligible participants access American Job Center (AJC) services, are triaged and referred for Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) services, and receive individualized career services through a case management framework.**

Participants seeking DLR JVSG services may initiate the process through various methods, including in-person, virtual, telephone, and DVOP outreach.

To ensure the delivery of employment services for eligible veterans and individuals, a non-JVSG staff member conducts a Veterans' Initial Assessment (Triage Form) to assess self-attestation eligibility for DVOP services. The Triage Form can be completed in person, virtually, or over the phone. If the participant qualifies for DVOP services and expresses interest in working with a DVOP, they are referred to a JVSG Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist (or a Consolidated Position (CP) specialist with DVOP capabilities) for employment services. When a DVOP is unavailable, non-JVSG staff members will offer services to the eligible veteran or individual. The DVOP will promptly contact the veteran to initiate individualized career services.

The DVOP assists the eligible participant by utilizing the Objective Assessment process based on the 'Whole Person' concept to identify employment barriers. This assessment gives the participant and DVOP the opportunity to look at all potential barriers to employment and allow for communication. An agreement will be made between the participant and DVOP to identify which barriers inhibit employment and which barriers do not inhibit employment. Employment barriers that inhibit employment will be included in the employment plan.

The Employment Plan is designed to implement individualized career services in a case management process for the participant in which both the participant and DVOP agree upon the employment plan. Individualized career services can be different for each employment barrier. For example, individualized career services for a barrier such as homelessness would require more individualized career services and assistance to overcome this barrier than an employment barrier such as a service-connected veteran who desires employment with an employer that would require a minor job accommodation. Short-term and long-term goals and steps to complete the goals in a beneficial manner will be drawn up and the participant will have assigned tasks in the employment plan with expected completion time frames. The end goal is gainful employment, but the process can be short or long depending upon the needs of the participant. Assisting the veteran through various methods, including in-person, virtual, telephone meetings and email if needed. In-person meetings are best

practice, when possible, in cases when there are numerous employment barriers that require extensive services to assist the participant.

In addition to the Objective Assessment and the Employment Plan, the DVOP or CP can also provide counseling specifically designed to address veteran employment concerns, or in cases where unique employment barriers are presented, the DVOP or CP can partner with other supportive services such as Veterans' Affairs, VET Centers and other certified counselors. Also identified as an additional Individualized Career Service is Veteran Pre-employment Counseling where additional assessments and pre-employment training can be made part of the employment plan. And, since the Employment Plan is a living document in time, adjustments and additions can be made to the employment plan as needed.

Another very important part of the DVOP case management process involves the use of consistent contact to ensure the veteran is making progress in assigned employment plan tasks and that the DVOP can use consistent contact in helping the veteran stay on task and assist the veteran if there are problems or concerns. Consistent contact will be agreed upon by the veteran and DVOP and the DVOP will use the consistent contact policy throughout the entire case management process including after the veteran has obtained gainful employment.

(2) **How the DVOP works with AJC staff and partners to connect veterans and other eligible participants to training and employment opportunities.**

As mentioned above the DVOP will use various methods in providing services to JVSG eligible veterans.

- In-person, either at the Job Service Office the DVOP is assigned to, or the DVOP may travel to a location that is more convenient for the veteran. Some factors that may impact this as a necessary step could be for the following:
 - The veteran does not have transportation.
 - Lives in a remote location with limited or no access to the internet.
 - Veteran has limited resources and/or family support.
 - Veteran is skeptical of getting any assistance.
 - Places to meet in-person could include:
 - Public Library
 - County Courthouse
 - Church
 - Preferable location with access to wi-fi and internet.
 - Veteran's residence or location if not able to travel.
- Virtual, with this type of providing services veterans and the DVOP can communicate with visual resources to provide vital services and supportive services information.
- Email, this type of communication is very often utilized for quick updates and consistent contact to monitor progress on their employment plan.
- Texting, this type of communication is more dependent upon service plans of the veteran and possible costs associated with texting.
- Written letter to try and maintain contact if no other options are working.

The following is a list of job placement services that can be provided by DLR to aid the veteran or eligible person obtain or retain gainful employment:

- WIOA training programs that can be offered to an employer in a high demand field to promote the hiring of the veteran or eligible person. This can be accomplished by business outreach employer visits or use of virtual or other electronic means. The eligible veteran or person should also promote themselves to employers and provide DLR contact information for potential OJT and Apprenticeship

Training.

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding Program.
- Remain in consistent contact with veteran or eligible person to ensure no additional barriers to seeking, accepting, or continuing employment has arisen and needs to be addressed.
- Stay in contact with all members of an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) for a DVOP case managed individual. IRT members can be other DLR programs WIOA, Registered Apprenticeship, Re-employment Assistance (unemployment insurance program) etc. Also included in the IRT could be non-DLR agencies providing services such as such as homeless programs, food insecurity programs, assistance with counseling for specific barriers, etc.
- Referrals to supportive service agencies that offer needed assistance.
- Offering employers an opportunity to use DLR facilities to conduct interviews of veteran for employment.
- DVOP staff can directly contact employers and promote a veteran who has successfully completed their employment plan, or in cases where the veteran has not completed their employment plan and could use some additional assistance, the DVOP can discuss a Job Shadow or Work Experience opportunity with the employer.

(3) **How the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) connect in the local employer community to promote job opportunities for veterans.**

JVSG Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) staff (or Consolidated Position (CP) staff who are also able to do LVER duties) can assist JVSG eligible veterans in different ways. Some examples include:

-
- JVSG(CP) staff know the employment needs of the geographical areas and can best promote that Job Ready JVSG eligible veteran to employers who are seeking skilled and job ready workers.
- JVSG(CP) staff can coordinate with employers to sponsor AJC on-site Job Fairs for JVSG eligible veterans and Job Search outreach for employers to host open houses and interview opportunities for these veterans.
- JVSG (CP) staff can also bridge the gap between JVSG eligible job ready veterans and employers as it pertains to understanding and utilizing the unique skills veterans have to offer their businesses.
 - This might also include assisting these employers with understanding the culture and work habits veterans possess as well as encouraging veteran mentoring programs.
- Most of the above examples would be of an in-person nature, however, there is always a possibility that an opportunity for virtual employment for an eligible veteran performing remote work could be presented to an employer and could involve both in-person and virtual communication between all parties to this process.

(b) List the populations to be served by DVOP specialists and consolidated DVOP/LVER staff, including the eligibility criteria for referral to JVSG services.

- (1) **All populations served by DVOPs must meet eligibility requirements in accordance with Veterans' Employment and Training Service guidance. Please refer to the following Veterans' Program Letters (VPL), or most current guidance to identify eligible populations to be served by this grant: VPL 03-14, VPL 03-14 Change 1, VPL 03-14 Change 2, VPL 03-19, VPL 07-14, and VPL 05-24.**

Special Disabled Veteran

A veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who, but for receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs for a disability rated at 30 percent or more.

- A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

- A person rated at 10% or 20% and the veteran has a severe employment handicap

Disabled Veteran

- A veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
- A veteran who self-attests to a service-connected disability and has submitted a pending claim for compensation to the Veterans Administration.

Recently Separated Veteran

- An individual who has been separated from active duty within the last 36 months. .

Homeless Veteran as defined by VPL 03-14 Change 2 or most recent guidance.

- An individual who served in the active military, naval, or air services, and who was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable, and lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes any individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is publicly or privately-operated shelter for temporary accommodation, an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. Included in this homeless definition would be any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources to support networks to obtain other permanent housing. This definition does not include an individual imprisoned or detained under an Act of Congress or State law.

Offender as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38)

- An individual who is currently incarcerated or has been incarcerated.

Education

- A veteran who lacks a High School Diploma or equivalent certificate.

The following are the current **Additional Populations** eligible to be served by DVOP specialists as Authorized by the U.S. Department of Labor Secretary:

Young Veterans as defined by VPL 03-19 or most current guidance.

- A veteran between the ages of 18-24.

Vietnam-era Veterans as defined by VPL 03-19 or most current guidance.

- Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 4211, the term "Veteran of the Vietnam Era" is an eligible veteran any part of whose active military, naval, or air service was during the Vietnam era. 38 U.S.C. 101(29) defines "Vietnam-era" to mean the period beginning on February 28, 1961, and ending on May 7, 1975, in the case of a veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period, and the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending on May 7, 1975, in all other cases.

Transitioning Service Member as defined by VPL 07-14 or most current guidance and meets one of the

following:

- Transitioning Service Members who have been identified as in need of Individualized Career Services because they were assessed as not meeting Career Readiness Standards by the base commander.
- Transitioning Service Members who are between the ages of 18-24 years of age.
- Active-duty service members being involuntarily separated through a service reduction.

Is economically disadvantaged as defined by VPL 05-24:

- Meets the definition of a low-income individual in WIOA Section 3(36), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(36).
- Unemployed.
- Heads of single-parent households containing at least one dependent child.

Wounded, ill, or injured as defined by VPL 05-24 or most current guidance.

- Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units.
- The spouses or family care givers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.
 - **Note:** For purposes of the authority in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, caregivers support members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military units, rather than veterans.

(2) **Veterans' Affairs Vocational Readiness and Employment Chapter 31 Job Ready Referral for DVOP employment services:**

Chapter 31 veteran who has completed VA Vocational Readiness and Employment (VR&E) training and has been referred to DLR for DVOP gainful employment services. **Note:** Because VR&E uses different criteria in assisting service-connected disabled veterans the DLR Triage process is used to ensure this veteran meets the eligible status for JVSG DVOP assistance with employment services.

(c) Describe the roles and responsibilities of DVOP specialists, LVER staff, and consolidated DVOP/LVER positions by the state. These must be consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and 4104.

(1) **The duties of DVOP specialists are listed below:**

- Provision of Career Readiness (Individualized Career Services) services to eligible veterans and eligible persons using a case management process including the Objective Assessment, documented plan of action to include an Employment Plan and Consistent Contact. Individualized Career Services (ICS) could include counseling and career/vocational guidance, referral of veterans to job focused and outcome-driven training or certification, job development, and other duties that may apply.
- Facilitate placements to meet the employment needs of veterans, prioritizing services to categories of eligible veterans and eligible persons in accordance with priorities determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor.
- Review all open case files of current participants with a SBE or other authorized priority category and perform case management duties.
- Conduct relationship building, outreach and recruitment activities with other service providers in the local area, to enroll eligible veterans and eligible spouses, with a SBE and other authorized category populations in the local office. Some examples of outreach include:
 - County Veterans Service Officers

- Tribal Veterans Service Officers
- WIOA partners
- County Detention Centers
- Vet Centers
- Veteran Stand Downs
- Yellow Ribbon events
- Salvation Army, Goodwill, Red Cross, Volunteers of America
- Parole and Probation Officers
- Homeless Shelters
- Food Pantries
- Churches
- Veterans Service organizations
- Native American Reservations
- Host wrap-around service events to help connect customers to service providers.
- Host Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings with relevant partner agencies who can assist the JVSG customer.
- Coordinate with other service providers the JVSG eligible participant with, including unemployment insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation, training providers, etc.
- Hold individual or group employment workshops for JVSG eligible customers, identify and assist in obtaining accommodation needs for success.
- Develop employment opportunities for JVSG eligible customers by connecting with employers on behalf of a *specific* veteran and working with the LVER and Business staff who already have relationships with employers.
- Make referrals to partner agencies when appropriate to assist JVSG eligible customers in overcoming employment barriers.
- Build relationships with JVSG participants and conduct consistent contact with them to ensure needs are being met. The DVOP should not simply serve eligible veterans as they walk in the door. Rather, provide case management services for hard to serve individuals who need consistent contact and encouragement to stay focused on their goals.
- Utilize assessment results to develop short-term and long-term goals helping a JVSG eligible customer overcome barriers, improve skill sets, and obtain gainful employment.
- Complete SDWORKS data entry, including services provided, fiscal entry, forms uploaded and documented case notes.
- Provide a Wagner-Peyser Title III Initial Assessment (not a JVSG eligibility assessment Triage form) WIOA Title I Objective Assessment, and/or RES Eligible and Available to Work assessment.
- A DLR DVOP specialist will support and maintain a broad knowledge of all DLR workforce programs that can benefit eligible customers, this includes receiving training and learn internal policies and procedures as it relates to other programs that their eligible customer may benefit from.
- Provide information on the Job Service Office Quarterly Veterans' Services Report to their Supervisor/ JVSG Program Coordinator.
- DLR has established the following guidance pertaining to Consistent Contact for DVOP staff:
 - During the active case management process of the employment plan, the DVOP and veterans should have in place a process of consistent contact communication to measure the progress of overcoming employment barriers. Consistent contact can be any method which the veteran and DVOP both agree is suitable. However, periodic in-person meeting with the veteran would be a best practice, especially if the veteran is having difficulty in overcoming an employment barrier.
 - Frequency of consistent contact and communication with the case managed individual will

depend on their circumstances and barriers. For example, a DVOP will need to follow-up more frequently with a homeless veteran to ensure the basic needs of the individual are met.

- Maintain contact with the veteran at least every other week while in active case management, or more if necessary. Consistent contacts will be documented, and the next contact appointment will be placed on the scheduler such as SDWORKS or Outlook Calendar. Progress will be noted in a consistent contact case note as well as indicating the next scheduled contact. Also note if any changes have been made or will be made to the employment plan.
- Failure to deviate or delay consistent contact with the veteran in an ongoing, positive, and agreed upon progression could put the veteran and the employment plan at greater risk of failure.
- Keep track of important dates of the employment plan and check with the veteran to ensure that veteran is on track to complete the steps necessary for addressing each employment barrier of the plan.
- Once the veteran has successfully completed all employment barriers and has obtained gainful employment, the DVOP will continue to do consistent contacts once a month and right before program exit to ensure that the employment is progressing in a positive manner. If any concerns arise during these consistent contacts the DVOP has an opportunity to reach out to the veteran and employer to discuss a proper course of action and resources that can be incorporated to result in a positive direction for both the veteran and employer.

Note: If the DVOP is not able to make contact with the veteran during the active case management period, the DVOP will need to document bi-weekly contact attempts within the course of two months. It is very important that the DVOP document the method of contact attempts and the results of the contact. The DVOP will also notify their supervisor of this situation. If unable to make contact with the veteran after the above-described time period, the DVOP can discontinue these outreach contact attempts. If the DVOP is contacted by the veteran again later, the DVOP will need to ensure that the veteran is still eligible for DVOP services before continuing to provide additional services.

(2) **The duties of the LVER staff are listed below:**

- Advocate for all veterans served by the AJC with business, industry, and other community-based organizations by participating in appropriate activities.
- Build the capacity of AJC staff to more effectively serve veteran customers.
- Provide information to JVSG staff on veterans' employment, training and placement services and updates AJC staff on initiatives.
- Participate in AJC staff meetings or cross-training opportunities.
- Conduct outreach to employers including seminars for employers and by working with employers, will conduct job search job search workshops and establish job search groups.
- Will plan and participate in job and career fairs.
- Coordinate with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans, as well as coordinate and participate with other business outreach efforts.
- Inform federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans.
- Promote credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans.
- Facilitate employment, training and placement services within the state's employment service delivery system, ensuring easier access to the appropriate employment and training services for job seeking veterans.
- Be part of the business outreach team.

- Educate local office partner staff with current initiatives and programs for veterans.
- Provide information on the Job Service Office Quarterly Veterans' Services Report to their supervisor who forwards it to the JVSG Program Coordinator.
- Promote the advantages of hiring veterans to employers, employer associations, and business groups.
- Educate Businesses on:
 - Veteran's workforce needs. Help them become more veteran friendly and veteran ready by understanding the culture and language of veterans.
 - Recruiting, hiring, and retaining veteran's strategies and initiatives.
- Assist DLR staff with:
 - Finding all veterans job placement opportunities by working in tandem with any Employment Specialist. LVER duties allow for the opportunity to assist in the placement of any veteran, not just SBE veterans. Work with DVOP specialists in helping promote and place job ready veterans.
- Assist Employers with:
 - Building the capacity for hiring veterans, such as reviewing application forms, implementing veteran's priority, or providing accommodations.
 - Creating and implementing initiatives to be eligible for the HIRE Vets Medallion Award program and assisting eligible employers with applying for this award program.

(3) **The duties of the Consolidated Position (CP) are adhered to in accordance with current guidance.**

- A Consolidated Position is a full-time JVSG position for a single person to perform both DVOP and LVER duties. CP duties are listed above in 1(c) and 2(c).
- Unlike a stand-alone DVOP or LVER position as mentioned above, the CP **is not** restricted to having to their CP duties evenly performed such as reporting 50% to each portion of the CP job duties. The CP uses their ability to perform their job duties in the areas which best assist veterans and employers to the greatest extent.
 - **Note:** As of this writing DLR does not have any stand-alone DVOP or LVER staff. DLR currently has four (CP) full-time staff. There are (2) full-time CP staff in Sioux Falls, and there are two (2) full-time CP staff in Rapid City.

(d) Demonstrate the manner in which DVOP, LVER, and consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are integrated into the state's employment service delivery system, i.e., AJCs. This demonstration should show active engagement between JVSG and other AJC staff, such as through participation in staff meetings and cross-training opportunities. [OBJ]

Since South Dakota DLR only has Consolidated Positions the DVOP portion of how the CP is integrated into the state's employment delivery system will be discussed in section 1(d).

- The DVOP duties of the CP are integrated within the DLR local offices (AJC's) where applicable and these assigned duties do not interfere with the assigned responsibilities of non-JVSG staff.
- CP staff are expected to learn about the various services and programs non-JVSG staff work with so that the best services available and co-enrollment into one or more DLR programs can be completed. Conversely, non-JVSG staff are provided information on how the DVOP assists eligible veterans or eligible persons and how these services are conducted. This makes for the possibility of an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) in assisting a JVSG eligible veteran or person.
- The CP utilizing the DVOP function of their position can integrate more fully into the DLR Job Service by providing the following assistance to their co-workers:

- Answering questions that coworker staff have about the Triage Form when they are assessing a veteran for DVOP referral status.
- Providing coworkers with additional veteran resources even if the veteran is not eligible for DVOP services.
- Attend training of other DLR services that will allow the CP to expand their resource list of additional services for eligible veterans and eligible persons. Examples of this would be:
 - DVOP duties include being trained in WIOA to provide greater services to the veterans they are working with. This has been met with great success. Assisting veterans with co-enrolling into WIOA.
 - Being cross trained in Re-employment assistance (unemployment insurance) to better assist and coordinate services for the veterans they are working with.
- Provide information to DLR coworkers at staff meetings and answer questions on DVOP services and how to coordinate other DLR programs through an IRT process among co-enrollment programs. Examples of this would include:
 - Assisting non-JVSG staff with information on how best to understand veterans, their military culture and background, how to promote their program to veterans that are co-enrolled in other DLR supportive service programs or training programs.
 - Allow for the CP to maintain close IRT contact with a DLR co-worker having a difficult time in getting a JVSG eligible veteran to open-up or buy-in to the services which they are promoting to this co-enrolled veteran in another DLR program.
- As part of a JVSG Territory Coverage Area, Job Service Offices that do not have in-office JVSG staff can reach out to the CP of the coverage area and have DVOP services provided to an eligible veteran or eligible person who is requesting DVOP services. A best practice in these types of cases is for both the Job Service Office staff and the CP provide services to give the participant the best possible outcome. This is a very favorable IRT situation.
- To foster the best communication and assistance to eligible veterans, the CP needs to find time to visit all the Job Service Offices within their total coverage area. In-person visits would be best but because of tighter budgets and distances involved, virtual meetings will also be viable.

Since South Dakota DLR only has Consolidated Positions, the LVER portion of how the CP is integrated into the state's employment delivery system will be discussed in Section 2(d).

- The LVER duties for the CP are integrated into the DLR Job Service Offices (AJC's) where applicable. All CP staff have assigned territories to ensure there is coverage for the entire state. Job Service Offices without CP staff can reach out to the CP assigned to their area. Examples of what the CP can provide to the AJC's is defined below:
 - Since the LVER focuses on the business side of hiring veterans, the CP is part of the local office business outreach team and assists the AJC's in promoting and hiring of veterans. Unlike the DVOP duties of the CP, the LVER duties allow for the CP to promote the hiring of all veterans, regardless of whether the veterans are JVSG eligible.
 - CP staff are also part of the Business Employment Services Team (BEST) that has business outreach representative members from DLR Job Service Offices and keeps in contact with all members for information and best practices. Arrangements were made to have The Dallas VETS Regional Office provide training to all BEST members on the promoting and hiring of veterans to employers.
 - The CP will speak to employers as part of a business team group of DLR staff where many important services and programs are presented to the employer. The CP will help ensure that no duplicative contact with the employer will happen as the CP will arrange with the business

services team a plan that provides the employer/business with the best possible services and coordination of contact.

- Because the CP is very closely involved with the WIOA process of the Job Service Offices, information on training programs and other WIOA services are given additional exposure to businesses seeking to hire veterans.
- The LVER portion of the CP also provides training on veteran services and veteran tendencies to the Job Service Office staff and assists in providing DLR staff with new or updated veteran hiring initiatives.
- The LVER can assist all non-JVSG staff by promoting the veterans they are assisting to employers
- The CP also helps in planning and participating in veteran job fairs, non-veteran local office sponsored job fairs to promote the hiring of veterans and offering the use of DLR Job Service Office facilities for businesses in seeking and interviewing veterans for employment.

Note: CP staff are encouraged to use all manner of communication with their non-JVSG co-workers in the exchange of information and initiatives regarding veterans and employers. DLR has recognized the significance of having all Job Service Office staff learn some background on the different programs offered by DLR. Because no one will become an expert in all programs offered through DLR, having open communication and information available between JVSG staff and their co-workers will foster a greater opportunity for success as it relates to those seeking DLR services. This cross training and exchange of information has involved:

- VETS
- Staff meetings
- Workforce Memos on updates to training and guidance
- Microsoft Teams meetings and Virtual training sessions
- In-person meetings with DLR staff at different Job Service Offices within the CP coverage area
- One on one training as needed

(e) Describe the state's performance incentive award program to encourage individuals and employment services 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 employment service offices;

Incentive Eligibility: Individuals eligible for the incentive award include DLR staff members who provide direct employment, training, and placement services to veterans through the Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title 1, and JVSG programs.

- Through the incentive award, DLR hopes to increase the staff's capacity for creative, innovative, and exemplary efforts to assist veterans with their employment and goals.
 - **Note:** Labor Program Specialists, including the JVSG State Program Coordinator, Job Service Office Managers, and Directors are not eligible recipients of this award.

Nominating a DLR individual for an incentive award:

- Any DLR staff member in the following divisions can nominate an individual(s) for an incentive award: Field Operations, Administrative Services, Policy and Public Affairs, Technology Development, and Workforce Development.
- DLR staff members who nominate an individual(s) for an incentive award will use a separate nomination form for each individual nominated. The nomination form will be available on an internal DLR Field Operations SharePoint page.

- A nomination should include a description and examples of one or more of the selection criteria for the most recently completed program year.
 - **Note:** The JVSG Program Coordinator may nominate a staff member(s) if there are insufficient amounts of nominations received prior to the deadline for submitting nominations to the Selection Committee.

Note: The time deadline for DLR staff to submit nominations for the incentive award begins July 15th and ends August 15th of each year.

Selection Criteria for an incentive award includes:

SDDLRL will select individuals by utilizing the following criteria based on performance and activities during the most recently completed program year (July 1 through June 30 for which the award is given).

- A DLR staff member who provides outstanding and supportive case management techniques, creative and engaging service delivery; and/or
- A DLR staff member who provides coordination and collaboration in the development of strong partnerships to benefit veterans; and/or
- A DLR staff member who has demonstrated positive engagement with the business community to increase and develop employment opportunities for veterans; and/or
- A DLR staff member who strongly promotes the HIRE Vets Medallion Program.

All nominated individuals for incentive award consideration are submitted for consideration to the selection committee.

Note: Nominations for the incentive award will be reviewed August 16th through August 31st by the Selection Committee.

Note: JVSG staff will only be allowed to perform the appropriate statutorily defined roles and responsibilities as outlined in current VETS guidance.

Selection Committee:

The selection committee is comprised of the South Dakota Secretary of Labor and Regulation, Workforce Development Director (JVSG Administrator), and Field Operations Director. The Workforce Development Director and Field Operations Director will make a recommendation to the DLR Cabinet Secretary who will have final approval.

Note: The South Dakota Secretary of Labor and Regulation retains total discretion both to the fact of an award and as to the amount and/or nature of an award, if any, is determined by the Secretary without prior promise or agreement. The individual nominated for an incentive award has no contract right, expressed or implied, to any award; (and) The award is not paid pursuant to any prior contract, agreement, or promise.

Note: Incentive awards approved by the Selection Committee must be obligated by September 30th each year. For this reason, incentive awards will be announced prior to September 23rd pay period ending each year.

(2) **The approximate number and value of cash awards using the one-percent incentive award allocation;**

- DLR does not provide non-cash awards and administers the disbursement of funds.
- Based on the JVSG funding award total, DLR will administer the incentive award funds and disperse

approximately \$5,000 in cash awards with four levels of awards.

Award Level	Award Amount	Number of Awards
Platinum	\$1,200	one (1) award
Gold	\$800	two (2) awards
Silver	\$500	three (3) awards
Bronze	No less than \$150 (not to exceed \$300)	Provided to remainder of award recipients based on remaining funding.

- (3) **The general nature and approximate value of non-cash performance incentive awards to be charged to the base allocation; and**

DLR will not be using non-cash performance incentive awards.

- (4) **Any challenges the state may anticipate in carrying out a performance incentive award program as mandated by 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c). This should include any state's laws or policies that prohibit such awards, if applicable. Describe the state's efforts in overcoming those challenges.**

DLR is allowed to utilize the cash award payments of the incentive award program.

- (f) **List the performance targets for direct services to veterans provided by JVSG staff, as measured by participants':**

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit 59%
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit 51%
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit \$6,400

Senior Community Service Employment Program

(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.)

Economic projections are included in the economic analysis section of this strategic plan.

- (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))

Based on the goals of SCSEP—to foster individual economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities—and given demographics, desires, and barriers faced by the eligible population one must carefully determine what best meets the individuals' needs. Developing the skills to enter a new career that will provide higher-wages and benefits may foster self-sufficiency. In other cases, a part-time position to supplement retirement/social security income may be all that is desired or needed to foster individual economic self-sufficiency. SCSEP training opportunities are limited to government and 501c3 non-profit agencies. South Dakota SCSEP will work

towards aligning participant training with the top job openings in the state as referenced in the economic analysis section of this plan, by helping participants match with openings that can provide applicable and transferable skills.

- (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 CFR641.325(c))

The current and projected employment opportunities in South Dakota are discussed in further detail in the economic analysis section of the strategic plan portion of the South Dakota Combined State Plan.

The table below features the 10 occupations projected to need the most workers to 2032. Projected annual demand is a more complete indicator than projected employment levels of the future outlook for occupations since it also includes demand created by the need to replace workers who will switch to other occupations or leave the labor force entirely. This includes the need to replace those retiring, which is a major factor with South Dakota's aging labor force.

South Dakota Occupations with Highest Projected Demand 2022-2032					
SOC* Code	SOC* Title	2022 Employment	2032 Employment	Numeric Change 2022-2032	Average Annual Openings
00-0000	Total of All Occupations	511,117	550,566	39,449	63,435
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	14,569	16,165	1,596	3,668
41-2011	Cashiers	12,193	12,623	430	2,438
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	21,349	22,751	1,402	2,415
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	13,957	15,047	1,090	2,209
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	9,188	10,377	1,189	1,686
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	9,543	10,442	899	1,481
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	6,333	6,747	414	1,394
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	11,505	11,592	87	1,347
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	7,910	7,863	-47	1,054
29-1141	Registered Nurses	14,586	16,506	1,920	1,028
Notes: <u>*SOC - Standard Occupational Classification</u> Data is preliminary and subject to revision. Occupations with fewer than 30 workers in 2022 not included. For employment projection methodology, see http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/projections_technical_notes.aspx . Source: Labor Market Information Center, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, October 2025					

(b) Service Delivery and Coordination

- (1) **A description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs.** *This may alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:*
 - (A) **Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA title I programs,** including plans for using the WIOA one-stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e))

DLR administers SCSEP, Wagner-Peyser Title III, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I grants in job service offices located across the state. These programs are co-located in each office and share similar beliefs and overall mission of leading job seekers to sustainable employment.

Since December 2018, it has become a requirement that all individuals, whether deemed eligible or ineligible for SCSEP, must also be co-enrolled into both Title I and III upon applying for SCSEP. To assist in this coordination, SCSEP participants are registered for the SDWORKS management information system allowing them access to job openings as they search for unsubsidized employment. Enrollment in WIOA Title I also expands access to additional support services or skills training.

Coordination with WIOA Title IV, or Vocational Rehabilitation, is made easier by having the South Dakota Department of Human Service (DHS) offices co-located in most of the DLR job service offices. In South Dakota, Title IV is not administered by DLR but by DHS, a partnership between the agencies allows the grantee to ensure the most-in-need participants are being served effectively and remain sensitive to possible disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation makes referrals and guides possible applicants to DLR. If the applicant is eligible for the program, DLR and DHS staff work together for effective case management (determination of need, possible employment opportunities, possible objectives for the employment plan).

One-Stop Career Center partners are instrumental in SCSEP recruitment efforts for both participants, possible employers, and host agencies. Each staff member understands the purpose and eligibility requirements of SCSEP, watches for potential applicants, and distributes a SCSEP application packet to all interested individuals. DLR SCSEP Specialists staff work to promote SCSEP in all allotted counties throughout the state by hanging flyers and calling potential host agency organizations. .

- (B) **Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the State under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA).** (20 CFR 641.302(h))

SCSEP is represented in the state's American Job Center Memorandum of Understanding, which represents all workforce programs of the One-Stop System in South Dakota. Coordination with all partners takes place at both the local level with partner meetings that take place at least quarterly, with informal communication taking place as needed. At the state level, partner meetings occur at least annually starting in 2022. With the enrollment of SCSEP participants in WIOA Title III, the Wagner-Peyser program provides basic career services. These basic services increase the participant's confidence and give them guidance in finding a job. Examples of such services are basic computer classes, employment search techniques, resume development, job referrals, job search assistance, and access to the job order database. In addition, the WIOA Title I Adult program offers mock interviews, support services, and training services. SCSEP participants are referred to WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation based on needs identified through the assessment and case management process.

The South Dakota SCSEP grantee will continue its partnership with the following list of organizations and state agencies under the Older Americans Act (OAA) to help older workers:

- **Long Term Services and Supports** – This division is the equivalent of Adult Services and Aging (includes Title III of the OAA Amendments).

- **Information and referrals** to Adult Protective Services, Senior Health Information and Insurance Education (SHIINE), Crime Victims Compensation, Domestic Abuse Program, Assistive Devices, RX Access, and Adult Foster Care, Lutheran Social Services, HUD, domestic abuse, mental health counseling, and consumer credit counseling.
- **Community Action Programs** – HUD, USDA Rural Housing, elder nutrition programs, public transit program, Corporation for National and Community Service, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, National Senior Service Corps (NSSC), Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), Senior Companion Program, Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Transportation Advisory Councils Ticket to Work, National SCSEP Grantee, Center for Active Generations, Meals on Wheels, Adult Day Services, etc.

(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))

SCSEP service providers will continue to work with host agencies and employers to develop reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities and/or special needs to work and be successful in the SCSEP training assignment or unsubsidized job placement following training. DLR staff are trained to educate and encourage employers to access untapped labor pools for recruitment needs and will also provide technical assistance to employers about ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements and available tax credits through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program. There have been many years of coordination between the DHS, State Services for the Blind (SBVI), and veteran services for referrals and service provision to help older South Dakotans succeed in the job market. Continued referrals between DLR and these respective organizations will continue. The Ticket-to-Work program is a possible avenue for disabled participants to receive job search help through Vocational Rehabilitation. This program has not been widely utilized for SCSEP participants on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) previously. In 2024, SCSEP received direct referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation. These referrals were disabled individuals, that were unemployed, 55 or older, and interested in a work-based training experience. A possible avenue for further program coordination is with WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) would be referrals of adults over the age of 55 years who are pursuing their GED and who do experience a disability. If eligibility and a benefit from a Work Experience are determined, AEL could refer these clients during the period of GED prep work or after the GED was obtained... More coordination will be done for homeless shelters around the state, like developing the current relationship with the VA Black Hills Health Care System, and related organizations throughout the state. Financial planning and assistance coordination will be done with Salvation Army and senior centers. The SCSEP employment staff will coordinate referrals to partners who can assist with low-income housing, nutritional assistance, and medical care service programs alongside the Adult Services and Aging program throughout the state.

(D) Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))

SCSEP performance measures are determined by unsubsidized employment placement and retention, DLR will remain current on state employment and training opportunities determined by the LMIC. The state grantee SCSEP program coordinator will continue to research national and state industry trends by reaching out to LMIC and attending any Bureau of Labor Statistics webinars focusing on employment projection topics. To place SCSEP participants into employment, program administrators must stay prepared for the changing workforce requirements and trends to identify targeted training needs related to available jobs. For the state grantee, the SCSEP Coordinator is also able to work with the Title I program coordinator about training approaches that work specifically for older workers. One example is the Foundation for Future Educators (FFE) Paraprofessional Training. This training focuses on developing South Dakota paraprofessional workforce, and providing the building blocks for careers in education. All SCSEP participants are co-enrolled in WIOA Title I Adult, allowing them access to all training opportunities listed on the SDDLRL Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). , .

(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)

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation administers the SCSEP grant while also overseeing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title III and Title I programs. One-Stop partnerships continue to remain instrumental in recruitment efforts; every staff member within a One-Stop Center is aware of SCSEP's presence and understands basic program knowledge to relay to interested clients. A recently developed Strategic Partner Referral Form is completed with individuals who are interested and may be eligible for SCSEP, directly referring them to the program. Also, state grantee employees work with WIOA programs and have access to employers who have participated with WIOA programs to use as host agency sites. On a business outreach visit, specialists in the One-Stop Center speak to employers about SCSEP as a possible program outlet for training and recruitment. Even in a county where the state grantee does not manage the SCSEP program, specialists know to refer SCSEP applicants to the national grantees, NICOA. DLR Labor Program Specialists oversee the majority of the programs offered through the One-Stop Delivery System. These team members make up the DLR's Workforce Development Division. Coordination of programs occurs regularly and is supported through workforce memos, which include guidance, to the Job Service Offices. In addition, One-Stop Partner collaboration occurs at least quarterly at the local level. At the state level, coordination between required program leaders happens frequently. Since 2022 all partners have been invited to WIOA Partner Symposium DLR continues to host this in conjunction with the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Every SCSEP applicant the state grantee receives is enrolled into both Wagner-Peyser Title III and the WIOA Title I Adult program. Once an applicant receives an eligibility determination and a host agency placement for their work experience, the SCSEP participant continues to receive WIOA services while training at their worksite. SCSEP Policy and a SCSEP guide were released in November 2021, streamlining the co-enrollment process for better alignment for both Title I and SCSEP requirements; this will be a continuous project that requires ongoing staff training and continuous updates.

(F) Efforts to work with local economic development offices in rural locations.

As a rural state, South Dakota's workforce system is designed to succeed in rural locations. In partnership with DLR's Business Services Team, the grantee will continue to prioritize partnership development with rural economic development offices to promote the hiring of older workers as one piece to the workforce challenges they face.

(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.)

Local offices make every effort to establish rapport with employers who offer reliable career pathways and are willing to develop and maintain a working partnership. One of the current DLR priorities is to focus on business engagement strategies and service delivery to the state's businesses. Training that focuses on approaching business needs in a needs assessment and consultative approach is in current development and will be delivered to specialists in One-Stop Centers, including SCSEP specialists.

Once an employer's needs are determined, staff promote the skills and competencies of SCSEP participants as viable workers who will add value to the business. To assist employers in rethinking their hiring strategies employers are presented information on the value of hiring workers who are 50 years old and older. The data demonstrates older workers have higher levels of engagement, commitment, stability, productivity, experience, and problem-solving skills. Older workers are also a critical component of a multigenerational workforce often becoming mentors to younger generations.

South Dakota employers are accustomed to employing older workers. The labor force participation rate for those 65 and older in South Dakota is 28.7%, considerably higher than nationwide where the rate is 19.5%.

2024 Annual Average Labor Force Participation Rates by Age							
	Total	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
United States	62.6	55.9	83.7	84.7	82.3	65.9	19.5
South Dakota	69.5	64.5	90.2	88.0	89.5	76.7	28.7
Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey							

(3) **The State's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP.** (20CFR 641.302 (c))

According to the 2020 US Census Bureau, South Dakota's population is 886,667 people. Out of 886,667 people; White alone 61.6%; Black alone 12.4%; Hispanic 18.7%; Asian alone 6%; American Indian and Alaska Native alone 1.1%; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone 0.2%; Some Other Race alone 8.4%; Two or More Races 10.2%. South Dakota has slots located in the following reservation counties: Oglala Lakota, Charles Mix, Roberts, Bennett, and Lyman County. Given this information, SCSEP Employment Specialists travel to and conduct additional participant and host site outreach in these counties. Recurring office hours are held in locations elders may already be visiting, such as the Department of Social Services and the Senior Centers. The State has concurrent efforts to increase broadband access and digital literacy. Increased connectivity in these remote and under-resourced areas will improve virtual service access for interested and current SCSEP participants, while decreasing travel time and costs.

(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)*

SCSEP specialists provide direct linkage to service providers to assist their participants facing various challenges. Through the network of One-Stop Centers in the state, the SCSEP specialists have access to a wide range of community resources available throughout South Dakota. Community service needs addressed through SCSEP includes educational activities, transportation services, environmental quality, health care, housing, cultural and recreational services, as well as senior services such as nutrition sites, outreach, and referral.

By building relationships with non-profits on the tribal reservations, the SCSEP Employment Specialists are able to tap into a broader network of supports and service providers for eligible SCSEP participants. Commodity food programs, Tribal meals programs, HUD housing assistance, and rural community transportation organizations are integral in assisting SCSEP participation on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Oglala Lakota County.

(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))*

SCSEP adjusted its service and staffing strategy in the year 2022 to a regional model with two Employment Specialists dedicating their time to serving and recruiting SCSEP participants and developing partnerships with community service organizations and nonprofits. In the year 2024, a third employment specialist was hired to help with streamlining the intake and eligibility determination process and assisting with data entry tracking in the GPMS system. The Strategic Partner Referral form was developed, and helped DLR partnerships provide referrals to connect interested seniors directly with an Employment Specialist to begin the application process to determined eligibility for the program. Because of this new model, SCSEP was able to increase program participation by 43.59% from 2022 to 2024.

Program improvement over the next two years will increasingly focus on strategic public-private partnership development, increasing enrollments, streamlining internal processes, and transition planning processes to achieve the goals of SCSEP.

- (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))

The State will work towards continuous improvement in the following ways:

1. Strengthen assessments of participant skills, knowledge, interests, and aptitudes and define career objectives that are relevant for the participant's interests and abilities and local business needs.
2. Identify employers that have successfully hired participants, are seeking older workers based on input from the Workforce Development Council and business organizations and are identified in labor market information.
3. Publicize the success stories of former participants during the National Employ Older Worker Week.
4. Continuously discuss unsubsidized employment goals with participants and host agencies, to prepare for transition planning. Coordinate with other programs such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and to help participant employment rate by highlighting the benefits of hiring a SCSEP participant.
5. Practice diligence in data entry to ensure accurate outcomes are reported.

(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))

The US DOL/ETA ensures that the provision of SCSEP services is equitable within South Dakota through an equitable distribution plan. In accordance with the Older Americans Act (OAA), USDOL/ETA uses census data by county and annual program appropriations to calculate the allocation of authorized positions for each county in the State. The number of authorized positions is proportional to the number of eligible people in the county compared to the eligible state population. Reservation counties and the state's rural counties are most in need of SCSEP services. See below for a table of all related counties and the largest cities located within the respective county. The numbers below are comprised from the PY25 Authorized Positions by county data provided by the SCSEP National Office Team reflective of the statewide allocation in Attachment I of TEGL 16-24. .

- (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	Authorized Positions (PY25)	Allocation Changes
Bennett	2	No change.
Brookings	2	No change.
Brown	2	No change.
Butte	2	No change.
Charles Mix	3	No change.
Codington	2	No change.
Edmunds	1	No change.
Fall River	2	No change.
Hand	1	No change.
Hughes	1	No change.
Hutchinson	1	No change.
Kingsbury	1	No change.
Lake	1	No change.
Lawrence	2	No change.
Lincoln	2	Decreased by 1.
Lyman	2	No change.
Meade	3	No change.
Minnehaha	2	No change.
Oglala Lakota County	9	No change.
Pennington	7	No change.
Roberts	2	No change.
Spink	2	No change.
Tripp	2	No change.
Turner	2	No change.

(3) **Describe current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.**

The slot imbalances can be explained by the low population rate of counties covered by the state grantee and isolated rural areas. In South Dakota, all but two counties are classified as rural. For the past several years, the state grantee has struggled with filling all slots. In addition, the rural nature of the state requires considerable travel. It is a continuous balance to keep administrative and travel costs low while meeting program goals. SDDLRL has increased access to a virtual space to become more accessible to communities without local DLR offices to help decrease the administrative and travel costs while increasing outreach.

Increasing awareness of SCSEP in under-enrolled counties remains a priority for SDDLRL. SCSEP Employment Specialists complete outreach to these counties to build relationships with non-profits who serve individuals who serve elders at need. Identifying and investing in these relationships helps to build rapport within the community. This practice opens the door for 'reverse-referrals' by providing the grass roots non-profits with information about how SCSEP can support their mission with manpower and wisdom from older workers looking to reengage with the local workforce.

Additionally, the SCSEP Employment Specialists and Program Specialist provide program information with other service entities such as the Department of Social Services and the Department of Human Services and Department of Corrections in these counties.

(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.*

The Equitable Distribution (ED) Report provides a basis for determining a fair allocation of program positions with the State. This report is useful for determining where to prioritize outreach and partnership development, fill vacant positions, or advocate for reallocation as necessary.

(B) *Equitably serves rural and urban areas.*

All but two counties in South Dakota are classified as rural. The majority of the grantees authorized positions are located in rural counties.

(C) *Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520)*

When deciding between multiple, eligible SCSEP candidates for an open slot in a county, the following priorities are used in selecting an individual for participation in SCSEP:

- Are 65 years of age or older
- Have a disability
- Have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills
- Reside in a rural area
- Are Veterans or the spouse of a Veteran
- Have low employment prospects
- Have failed to find employment after using services provided through WIOA
- Are homeless or at risk for homelessness
- Formerly incarcerated or on supervision from release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination.

The Employment Specialist applies the priorities from above in the following order:

- Persons who qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran and possess any other of the priority characteristics
- Persons who qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran and does not possess any other priority characteristics
- Persons who do not qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran and possesses at least one of the other Most-in-Need characteristics

(5) **The ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the State.** (20 CFR 641.325(a))

See 6(A) below.

(6) **The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:**

(A) *Reside in urban and rural areas within the State*

According to the USDA, Sioux Falls and Rapid City are the only two cities that exist in South Dakota that classify as "urban" as defined by Census Places: Out of the current ED for the service area, the state grantee serves 7 authorized positions residing in urban areas (2 positions in Minnehaha County, 7 in Pennington County) and the remaining 47

authorized positions are in rural counties. This is equivalent to the ratio of eligible individuals regarding the entire population of the state.

(B) Have the greatest economic need

Elders in South Dakota need to work to pay for the necessities of life: food, housing, transportation, and medical care. Social Security benefits alone cannot cover all critical expenses to live an independent life and older individuals in the state must subsidize this with employment. The SCSEP grantees have found that many participants are working to pay for prescriptions, cover the cost of health insurance, and pay for housing expenses. The counties served by SDDL SCSEP that demonstrate the greatest economic need are Oglala Lakota and Bennett County. It should be noted that these counties coincide with Native American reservations. In the year 2023, the Census Bureau reports, Oglala Lakota has 37.1% in poverty and Bennett has a 27.7% in poverty. Out of the current ED for the state grantee, Oglala Lakota holds nine authorized positions and Bennett holds two positions.

(C) Are minorities

The 2020 Decennial Census report from the Census Bureau reports the following statistics for non-white minority population in South Dakota, 77,748 American Indian and Alaskan Native, 13,476 Asian, 17,842 Black or African American, 38,741 Hispanic or Latino, 543 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 15,057 other race, 46,665 two or more races, with white making up the majority race population of 715,336 out of a 8886,667 total population. In the most recent minority report, 41.5% of SCSEP participants identify as nonwhite minority.

(D) Are limited English proficient.

Please see the table listed below for South Dakota English speaking statistics. The state grantee reported serving 0% of participants with limited English proficiency.

Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over

Language Spoken	5 to 17 years	18 to 64 years	65+ years	Total	Percent of total
Total	163,921	530,925	169,586	864,432	100.0%
Speak only English	152,303	488,994	162,293	803,590	93.0%
Speak Spanish:	4,950	18,244	2,186	25,380	2.9%
<i>Speak English "very well"</i>	3,652	9,287	1,331	14,270	1.7%
<i>Speak English "well"</i>	1,057	3,959	148	5,164	0.6%
<i>Speak English "not well"</i>	241	3,344	612	4,197	0.5%
<i>Speak English "not at all"</i>	0	1,654	95	1,749	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey

(E) Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))

In PY22 and PY23, 24 of the state grantee's SCSEP participants, over 50% of the modified positions available, have met the definition of greatest social need.

(F) Formerly incarcerated individuals, as defined in TEGL 17-20.

In the most recent state grantee report, 22% of participants identified as ex-offender.

- (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))**

Specific program actions to minimize disruptions to current participants include the following:

- Monitor and adjust service levels, when appropriate
- Effectively manage budgets and expenditures
- Provide career services, including job search skills and computer training to expedite job placements
- Provide needed supportive services and make referrals to appropriate service providers
- Co-enroll in Title III and Title I

APPENDIX 1

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Include the state's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

	Title I – Adult Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	70%	%	70%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	70%	%	70%	%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,600.0	\$	\$6,600.0	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	68%	%	68%	%
Measurable Skill Gains	62%	%	62%	%

	Title I – Dislocated Worker Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	73%	%	73%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	73%	%	73%	%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$9,000.00	\$	\$9,000.00	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	70%	%	70%	%
Measurable Skill Gains	70%	%	70%	%

	Title I – Youth Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) ¹⁰	72%	%	72%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) ¹¹	74%	%	74%	%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$4,100	\$	\$4,100	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	52%	%	52%	%
Measurable Skill Gains	56%	%	56%	%

¹⁰ For Title I Youth programs, employment, education or training.

¹¹ For Title I Youth programs, employment, education or training.

	Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	51%	%	52%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	51%	%	52%	%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,800	\$	\$6,900	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	44%	%	45%	%
Measurable Skill Gains	37%	%	38%	%

	Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	70.5%	%	70.5%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	69%	%	69%	%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,800	\$	\$6,800	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

	Vocational Rehabilitation Program			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) ²²	60.3%		60.9%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) ²²	54.7%		55.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) ¹²	\$3,808		\$3,911	
Credential Attainment Rate	38.7%		39.9%	
Measurable Skill Gains	62.7%		66.4%	

	All WIOA Core Programs			
	Program Year: 2026		Program Year: 2027	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

APPENDIX 2

Memorandum of Understanding

South Dakota One-Stop Career Center System

July 1, 2024

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Changing labor markets and advances in technology have revolutionized employee recruitment and job seeking. Technology advancements are evolving rapidly, perpetuating shifts in labor market dynamics. Rising consumer expectations and global competition have transformed how business is conducted in most industries. Employers must move faster and more efficiently to compete for talent. It is imperative for public workforce systems to continuously adapt and reframe strategies and policies designed to support employers and job seekers.

The South Dakota Workforce Development Council (WDC), South Dakota's Local Board, provides oversight of workforce programming for South Dakota. The WDC seeks to establish a system to contrast the traditional transaction-based model, whereby each agency operates its own workforce services functions and participants physically visit multiple locations seeking services. Instead, a model offering proactive partnership with business representatives to identify industry's workforce needs paired with a unified structure offering integrated, comprehensive services to meet these needs. This goal is orchestrated by a seamless collaboration of talent development and support agencies.

The purpose of this MOU is to define the parameters for One-Stop partners in education, workforce, economic development, programs, and entities to create a seamless, customer-focused statewide One-Stop service delivery to enhance access to program services. One-Stop partners build community-benefiting bridges, rather than silos of programmatic isolation. These partnerships will reduce administrative burden and costs and increase customer access and performance outcomes.

This MOU is executed between the WDC and the One-Stop partners, collectively referred to as the "Parties" to this MOU. This MOU is developed to confirm the understanding of the Parties regarding the operation and management of the One-Stop Career Centers in the WDC service area of South Dakota.

VISION

The vision of the State of South Dakota is to collaborate amongst Government, education, business, and community to make develop a skilled workforce which will allow employers in South Dakota to expand business when the opportunity arises.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §121(c)(1) requires the Local Board, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official (CEO), to develop and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Board and the One-Stop Partners, consistent with WIOA §121(c)(2), concerning the operation of the One-Stop System in a local area. This requirement is further described in WIOA, Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, the American Job Center Network Joint Provisions: Final Rule at 20 CFR 678.500, 34 CFR 361.500, and 34 CFR 463.500, and in federal guidance.

Additionally, the sharing and allocation of infrastructure costs among One-Stop Partners is governed by WIOA §121(h), its implementing regulations, and the Federal Cost Principles contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 CFR 200.

SYSTEM STRUCTURE

ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER

Comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers

Comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers are a physical location where job seekers and employers have walk-in access to programs, services, and activities of all required one-stop partners. A comprehensive One-Stop Center must have at least one WIOA Title I staff physically present. As a single-area state, South Dakota must have at least one comprehensive physical center.

The Comprehensive One-Stop Center must:

- & Provide Career Services as described in Career Services [Policy 5.4](#);
- & Provide access to training services as described in Training Services [Policy 5.8](#);
- & Provide access to Employment and Training services available through WIOA Title I Statewide Funding;
- & Provide workforce and labor market information;
- & Identify as the American Job Center through the primary electronic resources, printed materials, and facility signage;
- & Provide physical and programmatic accessibility to individuals with disabilities; and
- & Provide access to programs and activities carried out by One-Stop partners as identified in One-Stop Program Services List [Form 3.2](#);
 - Access must be made available in one of the following methods:
 - & Having a One-Stop partner program staff member physically present at the One-Stop Center;
 - & Having a staff member from a different partner program trained to provide information to customers about the partner's program; or
 - & Making available a direct linkage through technology to program staff who can provide meaningful information or services.
 - Direct Linkage is providing direct connection at the One-Stop Center, within a reasonable time, by phone or through a real-time Web-based communication to a program staff member who can provide program information or services to the customer. Direct linkage cannot exclusively be providing a phone number, website, or information such as a pamphlet.

Affiliate One-Stop Career Centers

An affiliate One-Stop Center is a physical location that makes one or more of the one-stop partners' programs, services, and activities available to job seekers and employers. These sites supplement and enhance customer access to workforce services of the one-stop system. An affiliate site is not required to provide access to every required one-stop partner program or offer walk-in access to services during regular business days. An affiliate site cannot only offer employment services as described in the Wagner-Peyser Act. An affiliate site must be physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Specialized Center

A Specialized Center addresses specific needs, including those of dislocated workers, youth, or key industry sectors, or clusters. It must be connected to the One-Stop Career Centers by having a process in place to make referrals to these centers and the partner programs located in them.

Access Sites

Partner locations across South Dakota that do not meet the definition of a Comprehensive Affiliate, or Specialized site yet provide access to one or more of the services of the One-Stop System, are considered Access

Sites.

A directory of One-Stop Career Centers in South Dakota, referred to publicly as job service offices,” can be found at dlr.sd.gov. One-Stop Career Centers must identify as a “proud partner of the American Job Center Network” through primary electronic resources, printed materials, and facility signage.

ONE-STOP OPERATOR

The One-Stop Operator is the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) Division of Field Operations Director. The WDC selected the One-Stop Operator through a competitive process in accordance with the Uniform Guidance¹, WIOA regulations, and State procurement laws and regulations. The One-Stop Operator selection process must be completed once every four years. The next competition and selection will be completed by July 2026.

SERVICES

Services identified in **Appendix A** will be made available at the One-Stop comprehensive and affiliate sites through direct linkage. This list of services will be shared with customers receiving services through the One-Stop Career Center during the Intake process. Direct linkage is a direct connection at the One-Stop Career Center to a staff member who can provide program information or services to the customer within a reasonable time, by phone or through real-time web-based communication. This linkage cannot exclusively be provision of a phone number, website, information, or materials for access at a later date or time.

Referrals

A referral system is necessary to provide integrated and seamless delivery of services to workers, job seekers, and employers. In order to facilitate such a system, comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Career Centers agree to coordinate referrals through direct linkage. One-Stop partners agree to:

- & Be familiar with the basic eligibility, participation requirements, and available services and benefits offered for each of the partner programs represented in the One-Stop System;
- & Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and make available for partners and customers;
- & Work towards common intake and registration forms, eligibility determination, and assessments;
- & Provide substantive referrals to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs;
- & Evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys;
- & Robust and ongoing communication required for an effective referral process; and
- & Actively follow up on referrals and ensure partner resources are being leveraged at an optimal level.

OPERATING BUDGET

The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is a component of the overall operating budget for the One-Stop Comprehensive and Affiliate One-Stop Career Centers and contains the infrastructure costs budget. The IFA is part of the One-Stop Career Center System MOU and operates in conjunction with agreements entered into with other state and federal agencies, including agreements between DLR and the South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS), negotiated annually to fund programs.

Infrastructure costs of One-Stop Career Center locations are defined as n

¹ *Federal Cost Principles contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR part 200 (Uniform Guidance), including the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) approved exceptions for the U.S. DOL at 2 CFR part 2900.*

on-personnel costs, including physical location costs and virtual network costs, necessary for the general operation of the location. For South Dakota, the infrastructure costs are:

Physical Location Costs

- & Rent
- & Janitorial
- & Electrical utility
- & Garbage/sewer
- & Water utility
- & Natural gas
- & Other facility costs, including but not limited to landscaping, snow removal, or facility equipment

Virtual Network Costs

- & Computer services
- & Telecommunications

PARTNERS

DLR represents the following required partner programs:

- & WIOA Title I
- & Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Title II through agreements with providers
- & Wagner-Peyser Title III
- & Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- & Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- & Reemployment Assistance (RA) Benefits
- & Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)
- & Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Career Services in agreement with the South Dakota Department of Social Services

Other partners co-located in One-Stop Career Centers are the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Rehabilitation Services (VR), DHS Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) administered by the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative.

Other partners not located in a One-Stop Career Center include Job Corps Center (administered by the U.S. Forest Service), Career and Technical Education program (administered by the SD Department of Education), SCSEP (administered by The National Indian Council on Aging, Inc), and Native American Programs administered by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribes.

INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET

See **Appendix B**. The budget is established by Fiscal Year, July 1 to June 30, and based on historical costs from

previous Fiscal Year expenditures. The budget will be adjusted within the first 90 days of each Fiscal Year.

COST ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY

Physical Location Costs

Physical location costs are based on square footage utilization of the partner by each location, respectively. Costs are further allocated to various DLR programs based on the indirect cost agreement entered into with the U.S. DOL, Office of Cost Determination.

Virtual Network Costs

Costs for computer services and telecommunications services are allocated directly to the co-located partner for whom the account is established. Costs are then allocated to the non-located partners based on the cost per direct linkage as defined in the Services section on Page 3 of this MOU.

Direct linkage is the identified benefit to the non-located One-Stop Partners and is tracked as a Coordinated Referral Service in SDWORKS, South Dakota's data management information system. In November and May each year, DLR will assess the non-located partners and send invoices for benefits received based on the number of coordinated service referrals recorded in SDWORKS. Partners will have 30 days to pay the invoice to DLR.

The cost per direct linkage is calculated by determining the cost per minute of a DLR employee's telephone and computer costs, then multiplying by 15 minutes, which is the anticipated average length of a direct linkage conversation between a participant and the non-located partner.

Formula: $[0.032175 \text{ DLR cost} \times 15 \text{ minutes} = \$0.48 \text{ per referral}]$

The cost per minute for DLR is calculated by adding the four monthly South Dakota Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT) charges related to virtual costs (user fee, access fee, information management fee, and telephone line), multiplying by the number of months in the year, then dividing by the number of work minutes for a DLR employee (less holidays). BIT rates can be viewed on the Rate Sheet at https://www.sd.gov/bit?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0010725&sys_kb_id=2eb2272a1b47b5107dc3748d9c4bcbb6&spa=1.

Formula: $(95.75+63.00+126.00+37.00)*12/(2088 \text{ hours} \times 60 \text{ minutes} - 11 \text{ days} \times 8 \text{ hours} \times 60 \text{ minutes})=0.032175$

Each partner not located in a One-Stop Center will receive a quarterly bill from DLR for virtual network costs which will include a \$16.58 processing fee. This processing fee is comprised of the accounting transactions, receipt documents, and voucher audit fees charged by DLR for the processing of vouchers.

NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS

The Native American programs administered by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribes are not contributing to the infrastructure costs of the One-Stop Career Centers according to WIOA § 121(h)(2)(D)(iv).

COST RECONCILIATION AND MODIFICATION PROCESS

Actual costs will be reviewed and reconciled with the budget in November and May each year. The budget will be revised as necessary. Affected One-Stop partners will be notified of any budget modifications in excess of 15%. If a partner wants to modify the IFA, the partner will submit a notice to all affected partners 60 days prior

to intended implementation of the modification. All partners involved must negotiate the modification and reach agreement prior to the modification taking effect. Only partners who are affected by the substantive budget modifications need to sign for changes made to the budget. Non-substantive changes (less than 15%) made to the budget do not require renewal of the MOU or updated signatures.

Effective Period

This IFA is in effect at the same period of time as the MOU. **Appendix B** includes the details for the One-Stop System infrastructure agreement.

DATA SHARING

Data share agreements amongst partners will be developed as necessary but not be a part of this MOU.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All Parties expressly agree to abide by all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding confidential information, including Personal Identifiable Information (PII) from educational records such as, but not limited to, 20 CFR 603, 45 CFR 205.50, 20 U.S. Code §1232g, 34 CFR 99, 34 CFR 361.38, and any applicable state and local laws and regulations. In addition, in carrying out their respective responsibilities, Parties shall respect and abide by the confidentiality policies and legal requirements of all of the other Parties.

Parties will ensure the collection and use of any information, systems, or records containing PII and other personal or confidential information will be to support the programs and activities described in this MOU and will comply with applicable laws.

Parties will ensure access to software systems and files containing PII or other personal or confidential information under its control will be limited to authorized staff members assigned responsibilities in support of the services and activities described herein and will comply with applicable laws. Parties expressly agree to take measures to ensure PII or other personal or confidential information is inaccessible by unauthorized individuals.

Appropriate data sharing agreements will be created for confidential, private, or otherwise protected information which needs to be shared amongst the Parties for the obligations under this MOU, and to the extent that such sharing is permitted by applicable laws. Required confidentiality and ethical certifications will be signed by authorized individuals. With respect to confidential RA benefits information, any such data sharing must comply with all of the requirements in 20 CFR 603, including but not limited to requirements for an agreement consistent with 20 CFR 603.10, payments of costs, and permissible disclosures. With respect to the use and disclosure of customer education records protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the PII contained therein, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all of the requirements set forth in 20 U.S. Code §1232g and 34 CFR 99. With respect to the use and disclosure of personal information contained in VR records, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all of the requirements set forth in 34 CFR 361.38.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility to the services provided by the One-Stop Career Centers and all partner agencies is essential to meet the requirements and goals of the One-Stop System. Job seekers and businesses must be able to access all relevant information by visiting physical locations and connecting through virtual spaces. This includes communication and programmatic accessibility regardless of gender, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

Physical Accessibility

One-Stop Career Centers will maintain a culture of inclusiveness and the physical characteristics of the facility, both indoor and outdoor, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Services will be available in a convenient, high traffic, and accessible location, taking into account reasonable distance from public transportation and adequate parking (including parking clearly marked for individuals with disabilities). Indoor space will be designed in an “equal and meaningful” manner providing access for individuals with disabilities.

Virtual Accessibility

Partners should strive to offer as many services virtually as possible. Virtual services must meet accessibility standards. Information must be clearly marked and compliant with Section 508 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services code. Partners will comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010, requiring federal agencies use "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use" and all information kept virtually will be updated regularly to ensure dissemination of correct information.

Communication Accessibility

Individuals with sensory disabilities must be able to communicate (and be communicated with) on an equal footing with those who do not have such disabilities. All Parties agree to provide accommodations for individuals who have communication challenges, including but not limited to, individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, individuals with vision impairments, and individuals with speech-language impairments.

Programmatic Accessibility

All Parties agree to not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, gender identity and/or expression, age race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran’s status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. Partners must ensure they have policies and procedures in place to address these issues, and such policies and procedures are disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. Partners further assure they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues.

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

All Parties certify the prohibition of discrimination, and certify no person, otherwise qualified, is denied employment, services, or other benefits on the basis of: (i) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identification and/or expression, race, color, creed, or national origin; (ii) sex or age, except when age or sex constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification; or (iii) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability. Parties must ensure policies and procedures are in place to address these issues, and such policies and procedures are disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. Parties further assure they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal non-discrimination laws and regulations.

The Parties specifically agree to comply with WIOA §188, Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Regulations (29 CFR 38; Final Rule December 2, 2016), the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S. Code §12101 et seq.), the Non-traditional Employment for Women Act of 1991, Civil Rights of 1964 Title VI and Title VII, as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 §504, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended, the Education Amendments of 1972 Title IX, as amended, and with all applicable requirements imposed by or pursuant to regulations implementing those laws, including but not limited to 29 CFR 37 and 38.

INDEMNIFICATION

All Parties agree to recognize the MOU partnership consists of various levels of government, non-profit, and for-profit entities. Each party is responsible for injury to persons or damage to property resulting from negligence on the part of itself, its employees, its agents, or its officers. No Partner assumes any responsibility for any other party, State or non-State, for the consequences of any act or omission of any third party. The Parties acknowledge the WDC and the One-Stop Operator have no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of the One-Stop Career Center employees, agents, and/or assignees. Likewise, the Parties have no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of the WDC or the One-Stop Operator.

If any part of this MOU is found to be null and void or is otherwise stricken, the rest of this MOU shall remain in force.

GOVERNING LAW

Dispute and Impasse Resolution

All Parties will actively participate in good faith effort to reach agreement. Disputes between Parties will be attempted to be resolved informally. If a resolution is not found, the Parties will send a written letter to the Executive Director of the WDC. The Executive Director will have 10 days to acknowledge receipt of the dispute and transmit the letter to the Council members. The WDC then has 30 business days to convene and hear testimony from all Parties involved in the dispute. After hearing testimony, WDC has an additional 30 business days to issue a formal resolution for the issue. The final resolution will be issued by the WDC Chair.

MODIFICATION PROCESS

Any partner may request changes in this MOU. Non-substantive changes to the MOU, such as adjustments of less than 15 percent to the budget made during the reconciliation of the budget, do not require renewal of the MOU. Other changes, modifications, revisions or amendments to this MOU must be mutually agreed upon by between the Parties to this MOU and shall be incorporated by written instrument, executed and signed by all Parties to this MOU.

EFFECTIVE PERIOD

This MOU is entered into on July 1, 2024. This MOU will become effective as of the date of signing by the final signatory below and will terminate on June 30, 2027. All Parties agree this MOU shall be reviewed and renewed not less than once every three years to ensure appropriate funding and delivery of services.

IV. AUTHORITY AND SIGNATURES

South Dakota One-Stop Career Center Memorandum of Understanding

<i>SOUTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL.....</i>	<i>I</i>
<i>SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND REGULATION.....</i>	<i>II</i>
<i>SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES</i>	<i>III</i>
<i>BLACK HILLS SPECIAL SERVICES COOPERATIVE</i>	<i>IV</i>
<i>SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES</i>	<i>V</i>
<i>THE NATIONAL INDIAN COUNCIL ON AGING, INC.....</i>	<i>VI</i>
<i>SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION</i>	<i>VII</i>
<i>U.S. FOREST SERVICE</i>	<i>VIII</i>
<i>CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX TRIBE.....</i>	<i>IX</i>
<i>LOWER BRULE SIOUX TRIBE</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE</i>	<i>XI</i>
<i>ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE.....</i>	<i>XII</i>
<i>SISSETON-WAHPETON SIOUX TRIBE</i>	<i>XIII</i>
<i>YANKTON SIOUX TRIBE</i>	<i>XIV</i>

V. APPENDIX

South Dakota One-Stop Career Center Memorandum of Understanding

- A. *One-Stop Partner Programs and Services | WIOA Manual Section 10, Form 3***
- B. *One-Stop System Infrastructure Funding Agreement***

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

SERVICES AVAILABLE	BENEFITS	PROVIDED BY DLR and ACCESSED THROUGH...	BASE ELIGIBILITY	INITIAL REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupation Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Skills My Future Career • Interest Survey 	Find out what occupation you have the aptitude for and interest in that aligns with your goals	The DLR website	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Reality Check	Identify financial needs and expectations to reach your lifestyle goals	The DLR website	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupation Information Labor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Information Hot • Careers • Career Aware/Career Peaks • O*Net • My Net Move 	Research information about careers that interest you and find out average wages, needed skills, etc.	The DLR website OR the U.S. DOL Website O*Net and My Next Move can be found on onetonline.org	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Searching in SDWORKS	Search for jobs in South Dakota	Southdakotaworks.org . <i>Not all job information is available without an SDWORKS¹ Account.</i>	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Applying for jobs in SDWORKS	Login to SDWORKS and apply for jobs	Southdakotaworks.org . SDWORKS ¹ account required	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Alison eLearning courses	Thousands of online courses in the areas of: Information Technology, Language, Sales and Marketing, Management, Health, Business, Engineering & Construction, Personal Development, and Teaching & Academics	Southdakotaworks.org . SDWORKS ¹ account preferred	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Northstar Digital Literacy	Self-paced training to improve digital literacy skills	Southdakotaworks.org . SDWORKS ¹ account preferred)	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Interview	Prepare if interviews virtually through an online module for interview prep and improvement using artificial intelligence. This program also includes an online resume builder.		Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Literacy Courses	Learn facts about the financial world while receiving guidance with your personal budget through adult education	Register at the DLR Events Calendar	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Safety Courses	Learn how to safeguard your private information while using the internet	Register at the DLR Events Calendar	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills	Learn about and develop skills employers are looking for, such as accountability, attitude, attendance, etc. (<i>Bring Your 'A' Game Curriculum</i>)	Register at the DLR Events Calendar	Anyone	None

¹ SDWORKS Account registration requires an active email address

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

SERVICES AVAILABLE	BENEFITS	PROVIDED BY DLR and ACCESSED THROUGH	BASE ELIGIBILITY	INITIAL REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Bring Your 'A' Game Anywhere	Self-guided curriculum for building the seven foundational workplace soft skills of work ethic	Self-service once login is provided (Request a login)	Anyone	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Assistance with Developing a Resume	Receive guidance in developing a resume from DLR staff	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Application and Job Search Assistance	Get assistance completing job applications and discuss details, appropriate answers, and references with DLR staff for an organized and accountable job search.	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Interview Preparation	Through in-person or virtual mock interviews, you can Review common interview questions and improve skills with the help of DLR staff	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone eligible to work in the U.S.	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ²
<input type="checkbox"/> WorkKeys® Curriculum™	For skill development in graphic literacy, applied math, and workplace documents and prepare to take the WorkKeys® Assessments to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC™). <i>See: WorkKeys® Assessments</i>	Self-service once ACT login provided by DLR staff at any DLR local job service office	Anyone Eligible to work in the U.S.	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ²
<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation to the One-Stop System	Learn about the services available to you through the One-Stop System.	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	None. <i>Can be completed prior to enrollment</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Referrals and Job Development	DLR has valuable connections to businesses looking to hire. Get connected to an employer through an interview to let hiring managers know your skills and that you are seeking employment	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Search Workshop	Learn from a live instructor about topics to improve job search, such as resume writing and interview skills	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORK ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Management	One-on-one assistance in reaching your employment goals including Employment Plan Development. DLR staff will connect you with programs and services not available through DLR that may help you in reaching your goals.	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment Plan Development	Receive career decision making assistance and plan the steps necessary to reach that goal	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone eligible to work in the U.S.	Email address for SDWORKS; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ²
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Shadow / Informational Interview	Learn more about your career interest through time on the job or an employer interview even if they are not hiring	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹
<input type="checkbox"/> WorkKeys® Assessments	Complete all three assessments to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate® (also used for basic skills assessments)	Request at any DLR local job service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Enrolled in funding eligible program, to fulfill job order preference, or self-pay	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; Other eligibility depends on individual

² Beyond the I-9 documentation and proof of age, required documents are based on eligibility and priority of services is found in WIOA Title I [Policy 4.1](#) and [Policy 4.3](#). Accepted documents for verification are listed by item in the [Data Validation Requirements](#) (WIOA Resource 20)

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

SERVICES AVAILABLE	BENEFITS	PROVIDED BY DLR and ACCESSED THROUGH	BASE ELIGIBILITY	INITIAL REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Registered Apprenticeship	Earn a paycheck while improving your skills and expanding your knowledge in a career. (Search for opportunities and learn more at starttoday.sd.com)	Request at any DLR local Job Service office or online through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone over the age of 16 eligible to work in the U.S.	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> On-the-Job Training	Training related to a specific job provided by an approved employer	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³ OR Eligibility criteria for TAA ⁵ OR TANF	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Customized Training	Classroom training specific to a job and provided by employer's request	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Experience/Internship	Planned, structured learning experience to take place in the workplace	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Service Opportunities	Work part-time for a non-profit organization to gain work experience and complete training activities to become employed.	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service SCSEP is also available through National Indian Coalition on Aging (NICOA)	55 or older considered to be Low Income (See WIOA Policy 4.12) OR Eligibility criteria for TANF OR SNAP E&T	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² For SCSEP: income verification and complete the SCSEP Application for DLR.
<input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial Skills Training	Learn what steps you need to complete to start your own business	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴

³ WIOA Title I services can include financial supports for those who are low income, on public assistance, basic skills deficient, ex-offender, high school dropout, or have a disability (priority of service eligibility outlined in WIOA [Policy 4.1](#) or the [Eligibility Desk Guide](#)). If Title I financial priority is not met, eligibility for funding through Family Focus may be possible (See WIOA [Policy 4.2](#)). For individuals 24 years old and younger, Title I Youth funding may be available (See WIOA [Policy 4.3](#) and [Policy 4.5](#)).

⁴ For financial supports for the groups listed in the footnote above, documentation will be required. Items are listed in [Data Validation Requirements](#) (WIOA Resource 20).

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

SERVICES AVAILABLE	BENEFITS	PROVIDED BY DLR and ACCESSED THROUGH	BASE ELIGIBILITY	INITIAL REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Priority of Services	All veterans receive services just like non-veteran customers. However, eligible veterans can receive priority of service for U.S. DOL programs	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	DLR staff will use Triage Form (Resource 23) to determine veteran status	If Title I, I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ²
<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled Veterans' Outreach Services	Some veterans are eligible for assistance from a specialty trained DLR staff member who is a veteran.	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	DLR staff will use Triage Form (Resource 23) to determine veteran status	Eligibility based on self-attestation for JVSG If Title I, I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² (<i>Including DD-214</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	An employer incentive for hiring specified groups of individuals.	Request at any DLR local job service office	See WIOA Policy 5.66 Conditional Certifications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Bonding Insurance	Provides insurance for justice-involved individuals to offer employers after release	Request at any DLR local job service office	Justice-involved or recovering from an opioid addiction with a job offer	WIOA Form 67 completed by business or DLR staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Services	Receive financial assistance for transportation, housing, work attire, daycare, etc. related to employment and training	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³ OR Eligibility criteria for TAA ⁵ OR TANF OR SNAP E&T	I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	Referrals and support services for counseling in the areas of mental health, behavior, alcohol, drug, etc.	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition Assistance for Post-Secondary Training Services Occupational Skills Training (OST)	Receive tuition assistance for studies linked to high-wage, high-demand employment opportunities	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³ OR Eligibility criteria for TAA ⁵	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion assistance	Receive assistance in completing Financial Aid forms and post-secondary applications	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Anyone	Email address for SDWORKS ¹

⁵ Once TAA petition is approved, request at any [local job service office](#) or through the [Virtual Job Service](#). Proof of layoff required for TAA (see WIOA [Policy 5.40](#))

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

SERVICES AVAILABLE	BENEFITS	PROVIDED BY DLR and ACCESSED THROUGH	BASE ELIGIBILITY	INITIAL REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring	Done in coordination with Virtual Tutoring provider, training provider, or Adult Education and Literacy	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I and financial services ³ OR Student with AEL or training provider	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I ² Proof of need for fiscal services ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development (Youth)	Activities in the community or amongst peers to develop responsibility and other positive behaviors	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I Youth ⁶	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I Youth
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring (Youth)	Receive assistance from an adult who can help guide you in life decisions	Request at any DLR local job service office or through the Virtual Job Service	Eligibility criteria for Title I Youth ⁶	Email address for SDWORKS ¹ ; I-9 Documents, proof of age, and verification items for Title I Youth

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY SERVICES (TITLE II):

SERVICES AVAILABLE	PROVIDED THROUGH ...	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
<input type="checkbox"/> Literacy and Numeracy	AEL Provider	Documents vary based upon provider
<input type="checkbox"/> High School Equivalency (GED® preparation)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Preparation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated Education and Training		
<input type="checkbox"/> English Language Acquisition		
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated English Literacy and Civics		
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Literacy		
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Skills Assessments		

⁶ For individuals 24 years old and younger, Title I Youth funding may be available (See WIOA [Policy 4.3](#) and [Policy 4.5](#)).

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (DHS/TITLE IV):

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH..	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
Employment Situational Assessments	performs the actual job tasks and the assessment addresses strengths and weaknesses to assist with vocational planning and training.	DHS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	Applicant or Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and necessary for determining eligibility and/or scope of VR services	None
Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors assist the individual to understand their disability and how their disability impacts employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide job exploration counseling, post-secondary education counseling and other services to assist students with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment.			None
Paid Work Experiences	Vocational rehabilitation works with local school districts to provide up to 250 hours of paid work experience each school year giving youth an opportunity to gain career experiences. A similar program is available for adults with disabilities.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and included on Individual Plan for Employment.	I-9, social security card, photo ID.
Vocational or other Post-Secondary Training Services	Depending on the approved employment goal and financial need guidelines, financial assistance can be provided to individuals seeking specific vocational training or degrees.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and included on Individual Plan for Employment. Individual must meet financial needs requirement.	Financial documentation; High school diploma or GED
Benefits Specialist Services	Individuals who are Social Security Beneficiaries can receive an assessment of their SSA benefits and guidance on how their SSA benefits will be impacted by with employment earnings. Guidance is provided to individuals on how to utilize work incentives or other means to maximize their work earnings.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and included on Individual Plan for Employment. Individual must be a SSA recipient.	Social Security acceptance and amount of benefit.
Assistive Technology	Assessment to determine the appropriate technology to perform work tasks, provision of assistive technology devices and training on utilizing assistive technology to accomplish work tasks.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and included on Individual Plan for Employment.	None
Transition Services	An array of services to assist students with disabilities as they transition from school to adult services. Pre-employment transition services include self-determination training; work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living instruction in self-advocacy, career counseling, and leadership training.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program, currently a secondary student with a disability and included on Individual Plan for Employment.	Most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is helpful.
Disability Specific Services	A variety of services available to individuals such as interpreting services for an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, personal attendant services for an individual with mobility impairments, blindness skills training and large print/braille documents for an individual who has visual impairments are some examples of disability specific services.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program and included on Individual Plan for Employment.	None
Job Placement Services	This service is provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or an approved Employment Specialist to assist an individual to prepare for or obtain employment.			I-9 documents
Job Coaching Services	Employment Specialists provide one-on-one training on the job site to assist with learning job tasks when individuals with disabilities obtain employment.			None
Supported Employment Services	Supported Employment Services consist of intensive job placement and job coaching for individuals with the most significant disabilities who need ongoing supports to maintain employment. Services are coordinated with an approved service provider to continue ongoing supports to maintain employment.		Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Program, eligible for supported employment services and included on Individual Plan for Employment.	Documentation of long-term services from an approved provider
Post-Employment Services	This service option is available for individuals who previously obtained success with their Vocational Rehabilitation Program but are now experiencing some difficulty in maintaining their employment. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can assist with additional employment services to help the individual maintain their job.		Individual's Vocational Rehabilitation case was closed successfully employed within past 12 months and individual needs minimal services to maintain employment	Documentation of past successful VR case closure

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
All subsidized housing	Household pays 30% of adjusted gross income for rent, remainder of rent is subsidized by one of the below HUD programs the family is participating in.	Various social service agencies; See CPD Program list ; SF Housing Commission and direct application to the Commission.	50% or less of median income; often 30% or less	Baseline eligibility documents including income, residency status; household composition; criminal history, etc.
Public Housing	Low-rent housing units under this program are owned and managed by a local Public Housing Agency (PHA). Individuals/families need to contact a local PHA to apply.	Direct application to the SF Housing Commission .	Under 30% of median income.	Baseline eligibility documents including income, residency status; household composition; criminal history, etc.
Housing Choice Voucher (formerly referred to as Section 8 Vouchers)	Many PHAs provide vouchers. Applicants must apply at the PHA office. When qualified, an applicant will be issued a voucher which will include the applicant's responsibility to find a suitable rental unit that meets their needs. Many PHA's have long waiting lists for this type of assistance.	Various social service agencies; See CPD Program list ; SF Housing Commission and direct application to the Commission.	50% or less of median income; often 30% or less	Baseline eligibility documents including income, residency status; household composition; criminal history, etc.
Project Based Assistance	This type of rental assistance is tied to the project. A family must apply directly at the project that has assistance.	Direct marketing by the project and/or referral from other social service agency.	Depends on program funding supporting the project. <i>Generally: 50% or less of median income; Often 30% or less</i>	Baseline eligibility documents including income, residency status; household composition; criminal history, etc.
Looking for Housing Assistance	Contact the HUD office at (605) 330-4223 or www.hud.gov/southdakota or sdwebmanager@hud.gov			

JOB CORPS SERVICES:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Assessment	Application includes a career assessment; student works with career counseling to select career training that fits his/her career goals and interest.	Boxelder Job Corps	All Job Corps Students	Job Corps email and Password
<input type="checkbox"/> Literacy and Numeracy (Reading and Math)	Improve your understanding of basic reading and math necessary to succeed in today's workforce.			Student ID
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	Students who need it will be enrolled in GED programs, additionally; the Box Elder Job Corps operates a high diploma program as part of the Lead/Deadwood school district allowing students up to the age of 24 the opportunity to earn their diploma.			Transcripts
<input type="checkbox"/> Career and Technical Training	Core component of Job Corps and offered in several growing industry sectors including construction/manufacturing, carpentry, electrical, welding, hospitality, culinary arts, medical, CNA.			None
<input type="checkbox"/> Career success standards	Counseling and discussion of the following success standards occur throughout enrollment in the program and contribute to lasting success in the workplace...workplace relationships, ethics, communications, personal growth and development, interpersonal skills, information management, multi-cultural awareness, career and personal planning, independent living, continuous learning, problem solving and critical thinking.			None
<input type="checkbox"/> English Language learning program	Provides youth needing to increase English proficiency the opportunity to learn the language and be better able to communicate.			None
<input type="checkbox"/> Work-based learning	As part of career and technical training, students participate in on-the-job training through partnerships with departments on center and employers.			Birth Certificate and SS card, green card, or DL

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION SERVICES:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical skills training programs	Certificates, Diplomas and Associate of Applied Science degrees designed to train individuals for high demand occupations.	Admissions	GED or HS transcript	Transcript or GED. Additional requirements vary by school
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring to enrolled students	Tutoring services provided by the school in specific academic areas.	MTC/WDT: Success Center LATC: Academic Support Coordinator	Enrolled as a student	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Time management and study skills training	Workshops for students which include topics important to being successful in higher education.	Student Services or Success Center	Enrolled as a student	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Success coaching	Access to Student Success Coaches to assist you throughout your program of study or training program.	Student Services or Success Center	Enrolled as a student	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Connect students with community resources	Connect post-secondary students to community resources to assist in completion of training program.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations	Accommodations are available to assist in completion of training program.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	Varies by school
<input type="checkbox"/> Credit by exam opportunities	Opportunities for students to shorten training program.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	Varies by school. Fee may be required
<input type="checkbox"/> Testing and Certification Center	Certification testing available to enhance student employability.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	Varies by school and test
<input type="checkbox"/> Administers the Veterans' Textbook Assistance Program and the NAHA funds	Assists students in getting resources they need to be successful.	SVO Organization	Veteran or family member using GI Funds	Proof of eligibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Fairs	Job Fairs are held on each of the technical institute campuses as well as in communities to assist in connecting students and job seekers to employers.	Career or Student Services	Enrolled as a student	Resume
<input type="checkbox"/> Career counseling/job search assistance	One-on-one or group career counseling designed to assist students with career decision-making and job searching. This includes such things as resume writing, interview coaching, etc.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarships	Qualifying students may receive assistance in paying for training programs linked to employment.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	Application, FAFSA
<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced technical training through corporate education	Advanced technical training programs, such as CDL and other short-term training programs, are available through each technical college's Corporate Education Center. Testing services and short courses on technology, test preparation, and other personal enrichment are also offered.	Corporate Education (For MTC, VP of Academics)	Enrolled as a student	Some need valid driver's license or professional license
<input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Recruitment Program	This program matches interested and qualifying students with sponsoring companies who pay part or all of the student's tuition and fees. The student agrees to an agreed-upon commitment to work for the company following graduation.	Varies by school	Enrolled as a student	Varies by school
<input type="checkbox"/> Ed2Go	Over 200 six-week long online courses in the following areas: technology, certification prep, writing, personal enrichment, entrepreneurship/business, languages, test prep, legal, and medical. (Not available at Mitchell Technical College)	Corporate Education	Anyone	None

ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...
<input type="checkbox"/> Native American Programs	<p>Programs are designed to support employment and training activities in order to develop more fully the academic, occupational and literacy skills; make individuals more competitive in the workforce; and promote economic and social development in accordance with the goals and values of such communities. These programs are administered in a way that not only meet regulatory requirements, but also in ways that are consistent with the traditional cultural values and beliefs of the people they are designed to serve.</p>	<p>Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux Tribe & Yankton Sioux Tribe</p>

NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmworker Jobs Program	<p>Assisting individuals who have worked on a farm or ranch and are seeking education, training and employment opportunities in agriculture or non-agriculture career fields. Financial assistance may include tuition, gas, groceries and/or rent</p>	<p>Black Hills Special Services Cooperative</p> <p>Contact information based on location can be found at nfipsouthdakota.org/contact-us/</p>	<p>Earned wages on a farm or ranch in any 12 consecutive months in the past two years (earned at least half your income OR spent at least half your time in farm/ranch work)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Service registration (if applicable) • I-9 Documents • Income verification for the 12-month eligibility period

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH...
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic Assistance	<p>Financial assistance for food, children, health insurance, weatherization for housing, heat, and for those who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services <i>SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, Energy Assistance, Child Care Assistance</i></p> <p>DLR RA Division <i>Reemployment Assistance Benefit</i></p> <p>Local Organizations <i>Refer to 211 Database</i></p>

DAKOTA ROOTS:

SERVICES AVAILABLE		PROVIDED THROUGH	BASE ELIGIBILITY	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
<input type="checkbox"/> Dakota Roots	<p>Dakota Roots matches out-of-state job seekers with Job Advisors in the One-Stop to assist individuals in the job-seeking process. Job Advisors will notify job seekers of openings available to meet their career interests.</p>	<p>DLR through SDWORKS¹ Account with <i>out-of-state address</i></p>	<p>Out-of-state job seeker</p>	<p>None</p>

ONE-STOP SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AGREEMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET | One-Stop Career Center

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

One Stop Location:	Aberdeen		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	61,065		61,065
Computer Services	41,844		41,844
Telecommunications	5,412		5,412
Janitorial	5,286		5,286
Electrical	2,972		2,972
Garbage/Sewer	448		448
Water	443		443
Natural Gas	2,972		2,972
Other Facility Costs	2,750		2,750
Total:	123,192	-	123,192
<i>Square Footage</i>	<i>4,473</i>		<i>4,473</i>
<i>Notes: DLR Field Operations pays 11.71% of utility and janitorial costs of the building. Space is occupied by other tenants and DLR programs.</i>			
One Stop Location:	Huron		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	69,207	-	69,207
Computer Services	33,475	-	33,475
Telecommunications	4,330	-	4,330
Janitorial	10,189	-	10,189
Electrical	3,830	-	3,830
Garbage/Sewer	840	-	840
Water	76	-	76
Natural Gas	-	-	-
Other Facility Costs	1,450	-	1,450
Total:	123,395	-	123,395
<i>Square Footage</i>	<i>3,580</i>	-	<i>3,580</i>
<i>Notes: DLR occupies its own suite in the Huron State One-Stop location and is billed its suite's utilities by the State agency holding the lease.</i>			

One Stop Location:	Mitchell		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	57,686	4,222	61,908
Computer Services	46,028	8,369	54,397
Telecommunications	5,372	1,082	6,455
Janitorial	14,760	1,080	15,840
Electrical	2,902	212	3,115
Garbage/Sewer	2,535	186	2,721
Water	596	44	640
Natural Gas	2,902	212	3,115
Other Facility Costs	-	-	-
Total:	132,782	15,408	148,190
Square Footage	4,370	320	4,690
Notes: DLR pays 93.18% and VR 6.82% of utility and janitorial costs of a shared space.			
One Stop Location:	Pierre		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	32,505		32,505
Computer Services	25,106		25,106
Telecommunications	3,247		3,247
Janitorial	11,220		11,220
Electrical	-		-
Garbage/Sewer	324		324
Water	-		-
Natural Gas	-		-
Other Facility Costs	-		-
Total:	72,403	-	72,403
Square Footage	2,300		2,300
Notes: DLR only pays for garbage utility. The landlord pays for all other building utilities.			
One Stop Location:	Rapid City		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	362,295	72,608	434,903
Computer Services	133,901	46,028	179,929
Telecommunications	17,318	5,953	23,272
Janitorial	20,902	17,374	38,276
Electrical	11,380	1,900	13,280
Garbage/Sewer	3,373	563	3,936
Water	-	-	-
Natural Gas	3,241	541	3,782
Other Facility Costs	501	84	584
Total:	552,910	145,051	697,961
Square Footage	16,872	3,754	20,626
Notes: VR has a separate lease with the landlord, but utility costs are on one bill which DLR receives. DLR pays 78.40% and VR pays 10.80% of utility costs. DLR & VR have separate janitorial contracts. Remainder of utilities for other non-partner entities in			

One Stop Location:	Sioux Falls		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	554,867	318,833	873,700
Computer Services	159,007	83,688	242,695
Telecommunications	20,566	10,824	31,390
Janitorial	30,927	17,771	48,697
Electrical	20,936	12,030	32,966
Garbage/Sewer	11,189	6,429	17,619
Water	13,427	7,715	21,142
Natural Gas	22,378	12,859	35,237
Other Facility Costs	33,567	19,288	52,854
Total:	866,863	489,437	1,356,300
Square Footage	15,370	10,768	26,138
Notes: DLR and VR moved into the new One-Stop in spring 2025. Budget reflects one full year of estimated expenses at the new location.			
One Stop Location:	Spearfish		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	72,480	11,223	83,703
Computer Services	29,291	15,035	44,326
Telecommunications	3,788	1,954	5,742
Janitorial	8,683	4,745	13,428
Electrical	6,873	1,229	8,101
Garbage/Sewer	-	-	-
Water	92	244	336
Natural Gas	905	246	1,152
Other Facility Costs	1,100	-	1,100
Total:	123,211	34,676	157,888
Square Footage	4,965	1,881	6,846
Notes: One-Stop expenses billed to DLR based on the square footage occupied of the whole building.			
One Stop Location:	Vermillion		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	36,672		36,672
Computer Services	25,106		25,106
Telecommunications	3,247		3,247
Janitorial	13,448		13,448
Electrical	2,089		2,089
Garbage/Sewer	376		376
Water	310		310
Natural Gas	961		961
Other Facility Costs	1,210		1,210
Total:	83,420	-	83,420
Square Footage	2,899		2,899
Notes: DLR pays 100% of utility costs of a space which isn't currently shared with other agencies or entities.			

One Stop Location:	Watertown		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	76,433	10,643	87,076
Computer Services	25,106	16,738	41,844
Telecommunications	3,247	2,165	5,412
Janitorial	11,535	5,448	16,983
Electrical	2,580	1,219	3,799
Garbage/Sewer	525	248	773
Water	-	-	-
Natural Gas	-	-	-
Other Facility Costs	1,886	891	2,778
Total:	121,314	37,351	158,665
Square Footage	5,401	745	6,146
Notes: DLR pays 28.90% and VR 13.65% of utility costs with the remainder paid by other non-partner entities. For janitorial costs, DLR pays 28.90% and VR 13.65% with the remainder paid by other entities. For snow removal and other entire complex costs, DLR pays 21.04% and VR 9.94%.			
One Stop Location:	Yankton		Office
Infrastructure Cost	DLR	VR	Total
Rent	44,700	19,440	64,140
Computer Services	29,291	19,020	48,311
Telecommunications	3,788	2,460	6,248
Janitorial	-	-	-
Electrical	-	-	-
Garbage/Sewer	-	-	-
Water	-	-	-
Natural Gas	-	-	-
Other Facility Costs	-	-	-
Total:	77,779	40,920	118,699
Square Footage	2,980	1,296	4,276
Notes: The Kanner building is State-leased space. Estimated FY2026 rate is \$20.00 per square foot, but actual rate is dependent upon billing from the Bureau of Human Resources & Administration. Rate includes janitorial and utility costs.			
GRAND TOTAL:	2,277,270	762,843	3,040,113

APPENDIX 3

Joint Powers Agreement between South Dakota Department of Human Services and South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation

**JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT BETWEEN
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
AND
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND REGULATION**

1. PURPOSE AND JOINT POWERS

The purpose of this Agreement is to establish procedures and safeguards to facilitate confidential information sharing between the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) and the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS). This exchange of confidential information on individuals receiving services is for the purpose of federal reporting requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

This Agreement does not establish a separate legal entity as contemplated by SDCL 1-24-5. The cooperative undertaking described in this Agreement will be financed and conducted under the provisions of this Agreement by the DHS and the DLR. Each party has responsibilities under the terms of this Agreement and no joint board or administrator will be used. No real property will be purchased for use under this Agreement.

This Agreement will further development of participant services, interaction, and communications between agencies engaged in Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act of 2014. The South Dakota Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan reflects strategies that advance the key WIOA principles, as outlined in the Employment and Training Administration's Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 14-15:

- Increase access to and opportunities for employment, education, training, and support services that individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, need to succeed in the labor market;
- Align workforce investment, education, economic development [management information] systems in support of comprehensive, accessible, accountable, and high-quality workforce development system;
- Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services;
- Increase prosperity of workers and employers, the economic growth of communities, regions and States, and the global competitiveness of the United States;
- Provide innovative workforce investment activities, through integrated workforce development systems, that increase postsecondary credential attainment and, as a result, improve quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet skill requirements of employers, and enhance productivity and competitiveness of the nation; and
- Measure the effectiveness, improve transparency, and support informed consumer choice through performance reporting, evaluation, and data system that support these activities.

II. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND REGULATION DATA

- A. DLR agrees to provide information collected through the Unemployment Insurance Program to DHS by allowing DHS to electronically access DLR automated data files located at an electronically secured site. The information will be accessed by DHS through the electronic matching of DHS vocational rehabilitation applicants/consumers with quarterly reports of employers. DLR will provide the following information:
 - 1. the amount of quarterly wages reported for each applicant/consumer by an employer;
 - 2. the quarter and year reported;
 - 3. the employee name;
 - 4. the employer name and address; and
 - 5. other data as deemed necessary for WIOA reporting.
- B. DLR data is displayed in the DHS Vocational Rehabilitation Fully Automated Computer Enhanced System (VRFACES) case management system. Only DHS staff with approved security to access the VR FACES and approved security levels will be able to view the DLR information.
- C. DLR agrees to provide information collected through its Management Information Systems (MIS) that collect and report data related to the three WIOA Titles DLR administers: Title I – Workforce Training, Title II – Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Title III – Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. The data provided between the two agencies is to be considered 'open-exchange' and be provided in relation to pertinent and required reporting requirements.

The information accessed by DHS shall hereinafter be referred to as "DLR data".

III. DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DATA

- A. DHS agrees to provide information collected through the DHS VRFACES case management system to DLR by allowing DLR electronic access to DHS data located at an electronically secured site. The information will be accessed by DLR through the electronic matching of DHS vocational rehabilitation applicants/consumers.
- B. Only DLR staff with approved security will be able to view the DHS information.
- C. The information accessed by DLR shall hereinafter be referred to as "DHS data".
- D. DHS data and DLR data will be matched to identify common data elements. Data elements necessary for statistical and federal reporting requirements under WIOA law are to be considered 'open-exchange' between core WIOA Title partner-agencies to include DLR and its directly administered title programs and DHS WIOA Title IV. Partner agencies must adhere to all security, confidentiality, and safeguard requirements further outlined in this Agreement. The sharing of data between DHS and DLR will be done in a manner that is prescribed under applicable WIOA law and guidance. DLR and DHS will develop strategies and data extraction methodologies determined to meet the intent of the law for the necessary reporting and performance data needed by both agencies.

The information accessed by DLR shall hereinafter be referred to as "DHS data".

IV. DISPOSITION OF MATCHED ITEMS

Data sets will be maintained by DLR for comparative purposes. DLR will destroy all individually identifiable individual information once it is no longer needed for analysis.

All subsequent analysis performed will be in consultation with DLR and DHS.

V. SAFEGUARDS

DHS and DLR agree to the following safeguards for the disclosed information:

- A. Information shall not be disclosed or released in any manner to any person or entity other than with approved security in DLR and DHS.
- B. Information shall be used only for the specific purposes described in this Agreement.
- C. Information shall be stored in a place physically secure from access by unauthorized persons. Use of unsecured telecommunications, including Internet, to transmit information is prohibited.
- D. Precautions shall be taken to insure only authorized persons have access to the information stored in the computer systems. Information maintained in an electronic format, such as magnetic tapes or discs, must be stored and processed in such a way that unauthorized persons cannot obtain the information.
- E. DHS and DLR shall fully and promptly advise the other party of any violation of the terms of the Agreement including any failure of any personnel to adhere to confidentiality requirements and procedures.
- F. DHS and DLR shall dispose of the information in accordance with their record retentions policies.
- G. DHS may disclose the information in accordance with 34 CFR §361.38 Protection, use and release of personal information.
- H. DLR may disclose the information in accordance with 20 CFR 603.5(e) as a public official for use in the performance of official duties.
- I. To allow on-site inspections if requested by either Department to assure compliance with this Agreement and confidentiality provisions of state law.

In accordance with federal regulation, the confidential unemployment compensation information accessed and received by DHS shall be subject to the safeguard provisions contained in 20 CFR § 603.9(b), which requires DHS to:

- Use the confidential information only for authorized purposes set forth in Section I of the Agreement;
- Store the confidential information in a place physically secure from access by unauthorized persons;
- Store and process the confidential information maintained in electronic format, such as magnetic tapes or discs, in such a way that unauthorized persons cannot obtain the information by any means;
- Undertake precautions to ensure that only authorized analysts are given access to the confidential information stored in computer systems;

- Instruct authorized analysts having access to the confidential information about the requirements as set out in this Agreement, including that any actual or suspected breach of the security of the information accessed shall be reported immediately to DLR, and that the penalties for unauthorized use, disclosure, or destruction may include disciplinary action and/or criminal or civil action, if applicable;
- Dispose of confidential information and any copies thereof made authorized analysts of DHS when the purpose for which the confidential information is disclosed has been served except for information possessed by any court. Disposal shall be carried out by an approved method of destruction, which includes; shredding, burning, or certified or witnessed destruction. Confidential information shall never be disposed of by placing information in wastebaskets or recycle bins;
- Maintain a system sufficient to allow an audit of compliance with the security requirements;
- Agree that the confidential information shall not be redisclosed to any person without permission from DLR.

VI. PAYMENT OF COSTS

Any programming costs for the exchange of the WIOA Common Data Elements will be shared equally with the WIOA Partners accessing the data. Any programming costs specific for a WIOA partner will be their sole expense.

VII. TERMINATION PROVISION

This Agreement shall become effective as of October 1, 2022 and will terminate on September 30, 2027 unless sooner terminated pursuant to the provisions of this Agreement. This Agreement may be terminated by either party upon 30 days written notice.

VIII. ASSIGNMENT AND AMENDMENT PROVISION

This Agreement may not be assigned by either party. Each party may request review or modification of the Agreement at any time, but any amendment to the Agreement must be made in writing and signed by an authorized representative of each party.

IX. CONTROLLING LAW

This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of South Dakota. Any lawsuit pertaining to or affecting this Agreement shall be venued in Circuit Court, Sixth Judicial Circuit, Hughes County, South Dakota.

X. NOTICE PROVISION

Any notice or other communication required under this Agreement shall be made in writing and be given by and to Pauline Heier on behalf of DLR, at the address of South Dakota Reemployment Assistance Division, PO Box 4730, Aberdeen, South Dakota, 57402-4730, and by and to Eric Weiss on behalf of DHS, at the address of Division of Rehabilitation Services, Hillsvue Properties Plaza, 3800 E. Hwy 34, c/o 500 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501, or such authorized designees as either party may from time to time designate in writing. Notice or communications to or between the parties shall be deemed to have been delivered when mailed by first class mail, provided that notice of default or termination shall be sent by registered or certified mail, or if personally delivered, when received by such party.

XI. FILING

DLR will file a copy of this Agreement with the Legislative Research Council and the Attorney General's Office within 14 days of execution as required by SDCL 1-24-6.1.

XII. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Agreement sets forth the entire understanding between the parties and both parties signify that they have read, understand and agree to the terms and conditions of this entire Agreement by signing the appropriate spaces below. Both parties further agree that the foregoing terms and language supersedes all prior agreements and negotiations, oral or written, relating to the subject matter of this Agreement.

In Witness Whereof, the parties signify their agreement effective upon signature by all parties.

Name: Marcia Hultman

Name: Shawnie Rechtenbaugh

Title: Cabinet Secretary

Title: Cabinet Secretary

Date: 7/24/2023

Date: 7/26/2023