

Attachment 4.11 (d) – State’s Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

The Division addresses identification of innovational and expansion activities through several means:

1. Strategic Planning Framework for 2004 – 2010. This strategic framework has been in effect for almost three years. This is a living document supported by aggressive team work specific to Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan. The Goal Areas of the Strategic Planning Framework are:
 - Successful Participant Outcomes;
 - Comprehensive Employment Networks;
 - Positive Organizational Climate;
 - Career Development/Succession Planning; and
 - Participant and Stakeholder Satisfaction.

The Strategic Planning Framework for 2004 – 2010 has as its Vision Statement: “Every New Mexican with a disability has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and the economic prosperity of the state.”

The Division devotes considerable amounts of resources to our strategic planning efforts to achieve its goals and priorities, support Title 1 innovation and expansion activities

2. Collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council in conducting Consumer Satisfaction and Statewide Needs Assessment Surveys.
3. Conducting Public Hearings; and
4. Continual assessment of federal regulations for the vocational rehabilitation program for necessary changes in agency policy and procedures.

Methods used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities flow from the processes mentioned above distilled into specific creative strategies to increase the number of caseloads, more effective cost benefit of caseload budgets, use of grant fund and contract arrangements to carry out programs, projects, and activities designed to improve the overall function of the vocational rehabilitation service delivery system while working toward improving collaboration and working relationships with other state and local agencies, the business community, community rehabilitation programs, and centers of independent living throughout the state, the Statewide Independent Living Council, DVR stakeholders inclusive of close collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council.

An area of expansion within the Division which has experienced continued growth is the Program Development and Supports Unit. The Program Development and Supports Unit assumes a leadership role in the development and supervision of federally funded grant projects and partnerships that expand opportunities for people with disabilities, whether or not they qualify for Title I vocational rehabilitation services. Unique programs utilize new assistive

technologies, reach out to help the under-served, provide education and counseling, assist individuals with disabilities to secure low-interest loans, seek transportation and other solutions to problems faced by New Mexicans with disabilities. Itemizing some of the Program Development and Support include: New Mexico Technology Assistance Program including a technology loan bank available to New Mexicans with disabilities as well as caseload counselors and their clients; Whatever It Takes Program New Solutions in Transportation; Transition into Registered Apprenticeship, Careers and Employment; Leveraged Integrated Networks of Consumer Supports; Benefits Information Centers; Working Individual's Medical Program, Social Security Reimbursement, Medicaid Adjudication Services. A very important and highly successful function of the Program Development and Supports has been the implementation of Navigators, a specialized team advising and advocating for people with disabilities who are seeking employment at the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions One-Stop Career Centers. The Navigators facilitate seamless and comprehensive services to persons with disabilities, access to programs and services and linkages to the employer community while also service a broad range of diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Division also expands collaborative activities with the Public Education Department to further increase and expand School-to-Work Transition activities and services for students with disabilities, the Native American Liaison projects, Centers for Independent Living, and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf.

The Division has also enjoyed improved working relationship with New Mexico Highlands University to promote internship and employment opportunities for students and graduate of their rehabilitation education program.

The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program mentioned above is but one way how assistive technology is made available to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis. In addition, counselors and their clients have access to and utilize a cadre of assistive technology service providers and professional to address the client's specific assistive technology needs. To this end, the Division continues to groom potential vendors to make available their products and services to underserved and unserved areas of the state.

Based on the demographics of Division clients served as of June 30, 2006, outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities include those with the most significant disability. One of the many specific projects to reach minorities is the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/Office of African American Affairs collaboration to educate the African American Community about Division services. The community outreach coordinator maintains efforts and rapport with various state agencies and governmental agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations to support and market DVR services. The coordinator also works with schools, churches, social and civil groups to overcome obstacles to employment for people with disabilities.

Outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program include supporting legislation to expand independent living services to counties in the state where there are non-existent services; expansion of services to migrant

workers mostly in southern New Mexico, and outreach to the hearing impaired populations as well as Native Americans through the New Vistas liaison project.

The State of New Mexico is mostly a rural, sparsely populated state except for pockets of dense population within the greater Albuquerque metropolitan tri-county Rio Grande corridor, inclusive of Santa Fe and Las Cruces and including outlining areas such as Farmington, Las Cruces and Roswell. The vast remainder of the state is underdeveloped and economically depressed when compared to neighboring states and other states across the union. As the fifth largest state geographically, the Division strives to be most efficient and judicial in providing Title I services statewide.

The Division works to establish, develop, and improve community rehabilitation programs by direct outreach activities of the Division's direct serve staff prioritizing positive working relationships in every community with local service providers. This is necessitated by the limited resources made available by community rehabilitation providers. It is not uncommon that where the resources are most limited, the relationship between DVR staff and the community rehabilitation service providers are close net based on years of mutual collaboration, trust, and shared experiences of both successes and failures.

The Division continually assesses strategies to improve the performance of the Division with respect to the evaluation standard and performance indicators. Program managers throughout the state, with the support of leadership within the Rehabilitation Services unit, continually support their staff to meet these challenges as well as the leadership of Rehabilitation Services Unit. Fortunately, in the past two years, the Division's established milestones of achievement have experienced an all time high rate of success with exceptional outcomes while exceeding all federal standards and indicators. The Division's leadership team and strategic planning efforts for continuous quality improvement by all staff have resulted in increased levels of professionalism as evidenced by increased productivity in all aspects of standards and indicators. In addition, the Division's efforts to increase the educational qualifications of all vocational rehabilitation counselors to meet the standards for licensure in vocational rehabilitation have resulted in improved professionalism and competency among all counseling staff.

Strategies of assisting components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities by the Division are impressive. The Assistant Secretary for Vocational Rehabilitation sits on the state workforce board. The local workforce boards each have prominent DVR staff as fully engaged board members with delegated authority to make decisions and act on behalf of improving and making available to individuals with disabilities the services of the workforce investment system inclusive of determining performance measures as well as monitoring commitments to provide services to individuals with disabilities and improve both physical and program accessibility for individuals with disabilities. In addition, the Division administers the United States Department of Labor navigator program in all one-stop centers across the state. It is noted that the navigator program has been recognized as the most effective service delivery component for individuals with disabilities in the One-stop system. The Rehabilitation Services Unit and field staff have initiated activities to promote One-stop integration for people with disabilities into the One-stop system achieved through memoranda of

understanding. This collaborative effort and resulting in placement activity with the local one-stop facilities and is one instance, the local one-stop is located within the rural DVR office.

The Division also launched initiative in Albuquerque to access TANF and difficult to place job seekers with disabilities with specialized programs to address these individuals' needs in job placement resulting in successful outcomes with competitive salaries for individuals who are traditionally very difficult to place.

To achieve state's goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1), the Division places a priority in terms of resources and activity. These goals directly relate to service delivery system of the Division addressed by strategic planning as directed by the Leadership Team of the agency. Leadership has aligned resources with these goals and priorities in mind. Continuous quality improvement initiative within the Division has resulted in the alignment of more resources to innovation and expansion of state's goals and priorities.

Barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation service delivery system and the state supported employment service delivery system are periodically reviewed and analyzed through formal assessment and continual collaboration with the Division's stakeholders. The Division's stakeholders provide information which is valuable as a source outside of the Division. The Division is committed to and actively engaged in monitoring and providing quality services. The client satisfaction formal surveys are valuable to providing an assessment of how well the Division meets these objectives. The Division also is committed to maximize the state's mandate of meeting the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act by working with the New Mexico legislature to secure state general funds to draw down all available Title I funding that can be made available to the Division.

New Mexico is unique in that the potential barriers identified in Section 427 of GEPA: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age; are virtually non-existent in New Mexico. The Land of Enchantment is proud of our heritage and diversity of mixed and integrated cultures. Although there are population groups in the general population which are few in number, they are proportionately represented as recipients of vocational rehabilitation services.