



Iowa
**Vocational
Rehabilitation**
Services

Finding solutions. Generating success.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

2015-2018 Strategic Plan

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Guiding Statements

Our Mission

We provide expert, individualized services to Iowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support.

Our Motto

Finding Solutions. Generating Success.

Our Vision

To Make a Positive Difference For Every Person, One Person at a Time.

Our Guiding Principles

We are responsive to the unique needs and goals identified by individuals with disabilities.

We demonstrate teamwork and cooperation among staff, customers and partners.

We operate with trust and integrity.

We demonstrate compassion and respect for all people.

We value continued improvement and learning.

We openly communicate with clarity and consideration.

We are results driven.

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Assessment

The mission of IVRS is *to work for and with individuals who have disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals*. Included as an agency within the State Department of Education, IVRS has positioned itself to undertake a comprehensive review of initiatives that relate to planning; specifically, the IVRS State Plan and IVRS Strategic Plan.

Just as the IVRS mission statement provides the current foundation behind the reason that IVRS exists, the IVRS Strategic Plan includes specific goals the agency has outlined for achievement in the future. As a primary focus for internal staff, the Strategic Plan reinforces state planning requirements mandated by IVRS' federal partner -- the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The Strategic Plan is the driving force behind activities at IVRS, and remains an integral companion to the IVRS State Plan.

The State Plan is required to be submitted annually for approval by RSA in order for IVRS to receive Title 1 and Title VI Part B grant funds. The State Plan describes the administrative and operational activities of IVRS, in addition to specific areas that involve public input, waiting list information, an analysis of data, goal planning, and an evaluation of reported progress. Significant legislative changes occurred in July 2014, with the approval of the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act (WIOA). This federal legislation will create opportunities for changes in service delivery, with a clear focus on increased accountability resulting in employment outcomes. Collaborative partnerships, dynamic service delivery focused on meeting the needs of our business customers, improved transition outcomes and services facilitating the transition into competitive community integrated employment settings for individuals with the most significant disabilities are just a few of the key points in the legislation.

WIOA will provide the driving force behind all subsequent policy development, statutory requirements, and regulatory guidance under which IVRS operates. The *Act* includes a mandate for a comprehensive statewide needs assessment to be conducted jointly by IVRS and Iowa's State Rehabilitation Council. The results identified by this assessment of needs are used to inform a collaborative, unified state plan demonstrative of partnership and unified action among other state employment service delivery systems.

Additional information that influences service delivery is also collected from surveys completed by internal staff and job candidates who have received services from IVRS. The resulting reports are evaluated annually, using state and federal mandates for service provision, in addition to standards IVRS has established as guiding principles. External service providers, as well as agencies with comparable missions or resources for individuals with disabilities, are solicited as partners who contribute to the mission of IVRS. During both 2013 and 2014, local community conversations were held across the state to solicit feedback from our job candidates, as well as our community partners. During the end of 2014, the Region VII TACE Center through the Disability Policy and Studies School of Health

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Professions, University of Missouri Health Systems, conducted a statewide interview with selected field staff and supervisors in an effort to further gather information and opinion to assist in developing strategic plan ideas.

Achieving the goals outlined on the IVRS State and Strategic Plans require a continual review of measures that assess customer satisfaction and employment outcomes. With an ongoing focus on individualized, yet innovative services, IVRS strives to balance the challenges created by capacity, unemployment and waiting list issues and further improve employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Highlights of the major goals for both the Strategic Plan and the State Plan are closely linked to the Governor's four stated priority areas:

1. **200,000 new jobs** - Through our Strategic Plan we will be tracking the economic impact and continued success of our employment outcomes on employment in Iowa.
2. **15% Reduction in government** - IVRS provides services to individuals with disabilities that cross many fields, including partnering with the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor. Future services will continue to be provided in an attempt to positively impact the numbers of individuals who are reliant on other government assistance programs.
3. **25% Increase in family incomes** – Competitive community integrated employment is an evidenced-based practice to positively influence family income. Specific standards are in place to continue to measure our impact in this area.
4. **#1 Schools in the nation** - Through the Strategic Plan, specific goals have been identified to positively impact transition services and continue to increase IVRS collaboration with school districts across the state, integrating improved career pathways for success.

STRATEGIC PLAN

1. **Develop and deliver customer service that integrates outcome focused business model strategies with the individual needs of our job candidates.**
2. **Increase service capacity and work effectiveness through advanced information technology.**
3. **Build external collaborative relationships which enhance results for lowans with disabilities.**
4. **Establish/maintain financial Accountability/Sustainability resulting in increased service outcomes for individuals with disabilities.**

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1. Improve retention and rehabilitation rate of job candidates from diverse backgrounds in the caseload annually through FFY15.
2. Collaborate with workforce partners to coordinate effective service delivery for IVRS job candidates through FFY15.
3. Retain eligible IVRS job candidates until they become rehabilitated, achieving their optimal level of employment and self-sufficiency, achieving or exceeding number of persons with employment outcomes in prior year.
4. Improve meaningful, sustained employment for supported employment consumers through FFY15.
5. Improve outreach and rehabilitation rates for individuals who are underserved, such as individuals who are age 55 and older, and students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing through FFY 15.
6. Track data and assess the effectiveness of benefits planning services provided by IVRS in FY15.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is done with consideration of the Agency Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis.

Strengths: Dedicated, professional staff. Work force planning strategies have been in place for a number of years. Expanding commitment to business relationships, Utilization of the National Employment Network. Growth of Occupational Skill training programs. Implementation of Employment First strategies. Collaborative partnership expansion with the Iowa Department of Aging and the Iowa School for the Deaf. Specific Transition presence, which led the nation in related percentage of referrals for 2013 with students in transition. Range, depth and variety of services that can be provided to meet our customer's needs. Sound fiscal management principles with record of no audit recommendations during the past two audit years. Staff leadership plan to create a positive impact on the learning culture.

Weaknesses: Staff can become content with status quo. Continued change is difficult, creating opportunities for resistance. Cross training/collaboration among bureaus can be a struggle. Role clarification issues between internal staff and among community partners. Changing technology makes it difficult to stay current with resources available. Employer development strategies and support in relationship to customizing for individual office strengths is confusing. IT support system statewide is difficult to access and does not supply local resources to fully maximize use of technologies. Specific training needs continue on eligibility, staff based vocational assessment impacting employment planning, direct job placement strategies and increasing job candidates with significant barriers to employment. Lack of sharing of promising practices when implementing problem-solving strategies, changes in WIOA causes increased accounting and case management changes which will result in need for service process changes.

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Opportunities: Continued growth in business and industry partnerships; National Employment Network/Talent Acquisition Portal. Integration of quality assurance measures into agency operations improvement. Involvement in research project for 2015 with IVRS being one of five vocational rehabilitation agencies across the country that will receive direct guidance and service in regards to how our agency can facilitate process improvements and highlight best practices among IVRS staff, which lead to successful employment outcomes. As we learn to better identify value points in our VR process, we can find ways to integrate and coordinate strategies within our strategic and state plans, resulting in improved quality performance management. Iowa Self-Employment Program developing Iowa entrepreneurs. Integration of area office placement blueprint plans for consistency. Iowa is one of three states to receive the initial ODEP Employment First Project and after a three-year involvement, we received approval to be one of 15 states receiving additional technical assistance for 2015. WIOA legislation will create opportunities for collaborative employment system planning to maximize resources and minimize duplication.

Threats: Changing emphasis on production standards versus quality and program integrity issues. Loss of knowledge among staff due to turnover, retirement. Community partnerships and lack of collaboration for common vision. Challenges for consistent delivery of service across state offices. Losing VR identity through federal legislation change. Interpretation/implementation of WIOA and how to ensure consistent implementation across stakeholder and employment systems, as well as with internal staff. State/federal funding limitations and Potential pending reductions. Potential conflict with partner agencies (IWD, DHR, DHS, etc.) regarding implementation of WIOA.

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Goal 1 –

Develop and deliver customer service that integrates outcome focused business model strategies with the individual needs of our job candidates.

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each area office implements a placement blueprint plan, which serves as a decision making tool, improving their placement culture and results in increased employment outcomes. 	1. Staff develops working relationships with business/industry culminating in increased business relationships/accounts.	Increase of Status 26s, employment outcomes, from prior year, growing annually.	Annually
	2. Implement progressive employment strategies focused on improving employability of our job candidates.	Identification of common performance measures tracked across employment systems.	10/1/2016
	3. Clear communication occurring impacting Transition Vision Analysis, Collaborative Transition Protocol, resulting in improved transition outcome data.	IVRS develops an ability to produce the required data measurements.	
	4. Service changes reflect WIOA intent to produce outcomes focused on business models.	Professional staff achieve between 24 and 26 status 26s.	9/30/18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training with Supervisors/work teams regarding job development and job placement services and identify strategies for area office to implement as part of local action plan. 	1. Community Provider collaboration occurs in every office, with clear communication plans implemented per office need.	Number of employment outcomes obtained by area office.	Annually
	2. AO identify their baseline of placement and enact strategies based on the blueprint to move the office to the next level of placement.	Number of business accounts and partnerships identified and business services tracked.	9/30/16
	3. A sense of urgency is created regarding service delivery response.	These measurements will need to be developed consistent with WIOA legislation.	
	4. AO utilize Chamber memberships to increase networking connections with	Legislators perceive IVRS as a partner in economic	

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	businesses.	development demonstrated by zero reduction in state funding.	
5. Good news stories from the employer perspective are developed and shared with the community through increased contact/visibility with the communication specialist position providing support. Local stories are generated specifically outlining VR roles and collaborative input.		Area Offices will share strategies and results from work performed through analysis of Chamber memberships.	Annually

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness is improved in communicating with job candidates on a consistent and as-needed basis derived by candidate's need. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff engage job candidate from application through closure by addressing their needs and proactively work to motivate the client through the process. 2. Professional staff integrates Motivational Interview techniques to effectively work with job candidates. 3. Quality services are delivered and demonstrated in case reviews. Agency is participating in QA research, review process for 2015. 4. Employment plans developed to support middle skill jobs and NCRC is integrated into planning process when applicable. 	<p>Improved rehabilitation rate resulting in increased employment outcomes</p> <p>Recidivism is reduced annually.</p> <p>Quality Assurance process is reviewed with participation in research project resulting in compliance with State Rehabilitation Council recommendations.</p> <p>Compliance is maintained with change in plan development procedures to 90 days from 120 days.</p> <p>Consider geographic coverage issues impacting PDT and Resource Team and identify actions leading to improved learning culture by empowering staff at the local level.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>9/30/18</p> <p>9/30/18</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely responses are tracked and reported per Human Resource inquiries, concerns with full consideration provided to sensitive/confidential and complex subject matter. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on checkpoints is shared with management staff on minimum of monthly basis. Services are expedited through improved DAS communication resulting in more effective hiring process. This is essential to ensure effective transfer of knowledge efforts in regard to staff turnover. 	<p>Checklists available and used by staff with roles and responsibilities clearly identified.</p> <p>Staff hiring plan is tracked to ensure follow-up communication with DAS with consistent review occurring in Chief management meetings across bureaus.</p>	10/16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Living plan is implemented with services consistent with the IL State Plan and targeted for those clients in the IL Program, and consistent with WIOA changes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Program Manager and related staff communicate collaboratively with Statewide Independent Living Council and internal staff regarding IL Operations. Clear plan is developed integrating new WIOA legislation. Strategies are identified to integrate services with ADRC “No Wrong Door Approach”. 	<p>IL budget accurately tracks service needs costs meeting audit and grant compliance with zero audit recommendations. Demonstrate increased service results with numbers of individuals served.</p>	10/2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify strategies to improve service capacity to business through Assistive Technology efforts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify workforce planning efforts that will enhance service delivery to business. 	<p>All Available IL centers are funded and have work plans implementing active IL services.</p>	12/18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review training and development needs and consider work task groups that can utilize communication technology to expand staff ownership and accountability for service practices planned and implemented. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Flow of communication can improve with practices shared across offices with regular messaging opportunities. 	<p>Documented changes in personnel structure</p> <p>Change documented in communication and work flow groups.</p>	12/16
			12/18

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Goal 2 –

Increase service capacity and work effectiveness through advanced information technology.

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology services for staff are identified and implemented as feasible with consideration of customer feedback, state IT policies and research focused on use of social media and texting. These IT services relate to improving communication and access with all staff and stakeholders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Information Technology plan is implemented to improve field staff access to resources and supports for more effective use of technology in service delivery. 	Social Media plan is consistently maintained meeting security compliance measures of state enterprise security system.	Annually
		Employment Outcomes are met. State data points are tracked.	Annually
		Public comments are tracked and timely communication occurs. Project Management Team provides active monthly reports on progress towards integrating system improvement changes as identified by field and management staff. This facilitates movement towards an electronic case management system	Annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further IRSS development; identifying revisions/additions with involvement of key parties across bureaus. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of PMT, IRSS Committee, and Technology Management Team (TMT) recommendations into cohesive IRSS plan that economically maintains level of service. Revised target dates are consistently reviewed and communicated through PMT. 	Improved access for field staff to identify capacity through improved case management practices and/or through use of technology.	Annually

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Goal 3 –

Build external collaborative relationships which enhance results for Iowans with disabilities.

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Employment First philosophies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lead state service discussion regarding pilot projects tracking data for increased community employment opportunities and provider transformation efforts. Continue with Community of Practice calls improving communication of common practices and promising practices. Continue discussion on improved rate alignments. Training and implementation of agreements with SES providers/DHS waiver providers, IVRS staff regarding collaborative system change regarding Employment First initiatives. 	<p>Monthly reporting requirements are met through ODEP. Tracking actual employment outcome data for participating projects.</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third Party Contracts are managed consistent with compliance standards and agency budget 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review through Contract Oversight Committee. Utilize individual and business supports as necessary to improve employment outcomes. Identify strategies to sustain benefits counseling in maintaining program income and to positively provide opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities to 	<p>Third party contracts maintained.</p> <p>Budget guidelines are maintained.</p> <p>Business measures demonstrate satisfaction with service delivery.</p> <p>Program Income, Employment results.</p>	<p>Annually</p>

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transition from institutional supports
to independence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative employment partnerships are maintained with Department of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Department of Aging, Iowa Workforce Development and Employer Disability Resource Network. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communication is maintained with partner agencies focused on effective service delivery for business customers and increased employment outcomes. Implement service delivery for state hiring for veterans with service connected disabilities. Implement new collaborative funding strategies with DHS 	<p>Employment Outcomes, Memorandum of Understandings are signed and implemented.</p>	<p>12/18</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify other collaborative system partnerships which will enhance ability of state employment systems to positively impact Governor priorities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Through EDRN, identify action steps to respond to business needs through single point of contact on a Central Iowa basis as well as what that system looks like state-wide. Closely integrate with WIOA legislation. Internal/external work teams prioritize changes in service delivery ensuring connection to Governor priorities. 	<p>Identification and development of new collaborative partnerships. Strengthen current partnerships such as IDA, for sustainability.</p>	<p>10/18</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of Occupational Skill Training programs meeting identified business needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Skill training programs coordinated through community providers, career pathways identified, post-secondary collaborative partnerships, apprenticeships, and business partnerships 	<p>Documented improvement of credential training programs impacting mid-skill development.</p>	<p>12/18</p>

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Goal 4 –

Establish/maintain financial Accountability/Sustainability resulting in increased service outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial resources are accurately predicted, managed and reported with no major audit issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly briefings are accessible to all staff. Management teams communicate financial status and recommend revisions in service operations, as appropriate. Financial planning tools are utilized for predictive ability. 	<p>Increase of overall dollars available to fund rehabilitation services.</p>	12/18
		<p>Monthly communication occurs regarding financial data pertinent to field operation. Legislative information is available for distribution per SRC guidance.</p>	Annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce layers of bureaucracy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Design policies and procedures consistent with WIOA legislation and empower staff to have flexibility in innovative problem solving strategies. Implement consistent with a flexible learning environment. 	<p>Review changes consistent with discussion of staff empowerment and complexity.</p> <p>Employment outcomes improve; staff satisfaction and QA reflect progress.</p>	12/18

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Key priority areas are communicated and reviewed to ensure focus is on key areas necessary to meet mission and vision.

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NOTES:

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