**Attachment 4.11 (a) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

**Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Minnesotans who are Blind, Visually Impaired or DeafBlind**

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Is designed to satisfy requirements in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and produce useful and timely information to both state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and state rehabilitation councils (SRC's) in jointly conducting needs assessments.

**Rehabilitation Act Needs Assessment Requirements**

**Section 101 (a)(15)**

(15) **annual state goals and reports of progress**

(A) **Assessments and estimates**

The State plan shall –

(I) include the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted by the designated State unit and the State Rehabilitation Council every 3 years**, describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of –**

(I) **individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;**

(II) **individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been underserved or underserved** by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this title; and

(III) **individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system** (other than the vocational rehabilitation program), as identified by such individuals and personnel assisting such individuals through the components;

(ii)include an **assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs** within the State; and

(iii) provide that the state shall submit to the Commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments, for any year in which the State updates the assessments.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) and its State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC–B) developed a process framework for conducting the triennial statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind Minnesotans. First implemented in FFY2006, this framework has subsequently been used as a guide to conduct the needs assessment.

SSB staff collaborate with members of the Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF), appointed by the SRC–B, to carry out the annual tasks associated with a needs assessment. The NATF’s responsibilities include to:

* identify data sources such as reports and surveys that provide information on the needs of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind;
* advise SSB on the scope and methods for conducting a needs assessment as required under the Rehabilitation Act; and
* make recommendations, based on needs assessment findings, regarding the Vocational

Rehabilitation needs of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.

Below are the steps included in the Needs Assessment Process Framework:

1. Identify the service needs of individuals.

2. Identify services provided by SSB to its customers.

3. Identify concerns or gaps in services.

4. Analyze the results obtained.

5. Allocate\realign resources; make recommendations.

6. Return to Step 1 and continue through the framework to conduct an ongoing and systematic needs

assessment.

There are a variety of sources from which to garner the information cited above including disability population statistics, including the American Community Survey, disability population estimates, population projections and economic forecasts from federal and state data, existing VR agency data, state and local data and reports, stakeholder input including customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.

NATF members and SSB view the needs assessment process as continuous and for that reason, activities for each year of the three-year cycle were identified. This cycle of activity was developed in 2007 during the review of the needs assessment activities and results. The framework for conducting a needs assessment has been followed in FFY2009, again in FFY2012 and will follow for the next cycle in FFY2015.

Three-Year Cycle of Activity for Conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Year 1 Conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities

Establish fiscal year goals, priorities and strategies

Year 2 Review needs assessment findings

Review goals, priorities and strategies

Identify what's missing

Year 3 Review and evaluate needs assessment process

Recommend changes to the process for conducting the next needs assessment

The following is an outline of information contained in this attachment –

**I. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities with Significant and Most Significant Disabilities, including Their Need for Supported Employment Services.**

**A. Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Needs Assessment Review**

**1. Findings**

**2. Outreach and Marketing**

**3. Transition Services**

**4. Closure Outcomes**

**B. Incidence of Disability**

**C. Service Data and Results for Individuals with Significant Disabilities, Title I, Part B**

**1. VR Caseload Data Highlights**

**2. Case Service Expenditures and Service Provision Patterns**

**3. SSB performance on federal standards and indicators**

**4. Current SSB\SRC–B Goals and Strategies**

**D. Service Data and Results for Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities**

**Including their Need for Supported Employment, Title 6, Part B**

1. **Case Service Expenditure and Service Provision Patterns**
2. **Findings**

**E. Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**

1. **Minnesota WFC Customer Satisfaction Survey**
2. **Findings**
3. **Current SSB\SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

**II. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who Are Minorities and Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved.**

1. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Minorities**

1. **Minority Services Committee**
2. **Case service expenditure and service provision patterns**
3. **Findings**
4. **Current SSB\SRC-B Goals and Strategies**
5. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Underserved**
6. **Case Service Expenditure and Service Provision Patterns**
7. **DeafBlind needs assessment survey**
8. **Findings and Survey Results**
9. **DeafBlind Committee**
10. **Current SSB\SRC-B Goals and Strategies**
11. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Unserved**

**III. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served through Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

**IV. The Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

**A. Adjustment to Blindness Vendor Satisfaction Questionnaire**

**B. Findings**

**C. Current SSB\SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

**V. Summary of Findings**

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**I. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities with Significant and Most Significant Disabilities, including Their Need for Supported Employment Services.**

**A. Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Needs Assessment Review**

Since 2006, the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) through its Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF), has evaluated the process SSB used to conduct needs assessments in the past and reviewed the current state plan needs assessment document. In 2012, the NATF identified additional information to analyze and determine gaps in services. The NATF was specifically interested in determining the number of transition students SSB could potentially serve and the collective progress in meeting Goal #2: “…Increase the number of individuals served and the vocational outcomes achieved.”

Data analysis included a comparison of the Minnesota Department of Education’s (MDE) child count data and the number of transition-aged students referred to SSB, thenumber of minority cases open, minority cases closed, referrals of persons from minority groups and the number of minority referrals annually from FFY 2009 through 2011.

The question of how many transition students we should be serving is difficult to answer. In an effort to gather more data on this topic, the NATF compared the number of transition-age students served during the past four years and the unduplicated child count from MDE during those same years.

Transition-aged students served:

* 2008: 48
* 2009: 57
* 2010: 52
* 2011: 37

Ages “08 “09 “10 “11

14-15 12 21 11 12

16-18 16 15 15 13

18-21 20 21 26 12

Unduplicated child count:

* 2008: 141
* 2009: 122
* 2010: 113
* 2011: 104

Further detail of the unduplicated child count revealed that in 2010, there were a total of 415 students, (.325% of all students classified as disabled and 046% of total student enrollment) listed as visually impaired or DeafBlind, 113 of whom were transition age. In 2011, the child count showed a total of 435 students listed as visually impaired or DeafBlind, 104 of whom were transition age. In the past four fiscal years, 194 students were referred while the child count indicates there were approximately twice that number of total blind and visually impaired (BVI) transition-aged students.

During the past several years, the SRC-B and SSB has monitored the effects of the Goals, Priorities and Strategies implemented in 2009 pertaining to transition students, especially the number of transition-aged students served. From 2007 to 2008, the number of SSB customers age 21 and younger served rose dramatically from 37 to 48, a 23% increase. This higher number of transition student was sustained from 2008 through 2010 at 48, 57 and 52 respectively. This is a noteworthy accomplishment demonstrating the important role of the Council in identifying the need and developing strategies and the determined efforts of SSB staff. The number of transition-aged students served fell dramatically in 2011 to 37. However, new strategies developed by the Transition Committee may address this lower number in 2011.

The NATF was pleased with these outcomes but chose to continue to recommend outreach activities to build upon the productive interagency relationships that have been established and maintain or exceed the higher level of transition-aged youth served during the past several fiscal years.

There was a significant difference in service provision, with the exception of adjustment to blindness training, between all customers and those from minority backgrounds all three years. The provision of post-secondary training was ranked second for all customers in 2009 and 2010, but only 9th and 10th for minorities. However, there was a marked change in 2011 as provision of post-secondary training ranked 2nd and 3rd for all and minority customers respectively.

Applicants from minority backgrounds increased gradually during FFY 2009, 2010 and 2011: 87, 95 and 106. Minorities constituted 37% of all WDU applicants during that period.

In FFY’s 2009, 2010 and 2011, SSB served the following customers from minority populations: 219 (20.8% of total customers served), 226 (21.5%) and 215 (21.3%) respectively. These numbers represent a significant increase from 2005 when there were 133 minority customers served or 11% of all customers served. In 2008, minorities represented 23% of the total, a proportion slightly higher than those cited above since 2009.

Even though the number of minority referrals has increased significantly over the past three years, the number of customers served has remained flat. Significant gains have been made in this arena but further attention to possible anomalies in the data is warranted, especially taking into account the substantial increases in minority populations.

Successful employment outcomes achieved by minorities during these three fiscal years were 11, 10 and 11 respectively. These closures represented 13.4% of all successful outcomes during that period.

Unsuccessful closures of customers from minority backgrounds decreased from 2009 to 2011 at a rate of 48, 39 and 31: a 35% decrease. These closures represented 29% of all closures, slightly higher than the 23% proportion of all customers served.

1. **Findings**

An analysis of the MDE child count data and the number of transition-aged students referred to SSB revealed that SSB and its partners are doing better at identifying and soliciting applications from this population but are only securing applications from approximately half of the potential population.

The NATF analysis of data related to minorities suggests that even though unsuccessful closures have declined significantly over this period, the flat number of successful closures suggests continued attention to this population is warranted.

The total number of SSB customers served annually was consistent during FFY’s 2008-2011: 1016, 1060, 1061 and 1015, with an average of 1041 customers served per year. The total number of referrals during those years were 253, 305, 258 and 207 respectively.

Referral sources were also found to have been consistent in referring customers to SSB for services. “Self-referred” was the largest referral source during FFY’s 2008-2011 slightly surpassing 50% each fiscal year. The number of referrals from elementary or secondary schools reached a peak of 42 in 2009 but has averaged approximately 25 per year in 2008, 2010 and 2011. Physicians made approximately 10% of the referrals in 2009 and 2010, but there was a steep drop-off in 2011 to 5.8%: again, likely due to the shutdown.

The number of Social Security (SSA) beneficiaries served by SSB is of particular interest. During FFY2009, 2010 and 2011, there were a total of 1093 Social Security beneficiaries who applied for services. The vast majority, 59.6 %, were self-referred followed by community rehabilitation programs, Workforce Centers, elementary or secondary schools and physicians which each accounted for approximately 6% of the total.

The NATF identified four areas of potential need:

1. Continue outreach to transition students;
2. Continue outreach to minority populations;
3. Increase overall outreach and marketing efforts; and
4. Continue to develop strategies to increase the number of employment outcomes for all customers.

SSB management has shared these concerns and taken deliberate steps to address them.

1. **Outreach and Marketing**

Pertaining specifically to outreach activities to transition students, several efforts were made including:

* In 2009 and 2010, four “SSB 101” activities occurred with disappointing attendance with a total of about 30 transition students and their parents.
* In 2010, SSB developed a series of short marketing videos regarding services for transition age students, working age adults and seniors. These videos are available on SSB’s website and on YouTube.

Below is a description of general outreach and marketing efforts made since 2009.

Senior Services Unit:

1. Fairs, expos and resource events. Since Jan. 1, 2009, Ed Lecher, SSB’s staff person responsible for marketing and outreach, participated as a “vender/exhibitor” in at least 40 resource-style events that are designed to highlight services for seniors. This activity is specifically designed as an awareness activity and is very difficult to measure. Each year in Duluth, Minneapolis, Roseville and Mankato, Ed participates in events geared towards seniors that reach thousands of attendees.
2. Large group presentations including conferences and resource events conducted by Ed Lecher:

* In 2009 and 2011, presentations at the Care Providers of MN conference. Each time there were about 50 attendees.
* In 2009 and 2010, breakout sessions at the MN Social Services Association Annual Conference. Attendees number approximately 40 each time.
* In 2009, 2010 and 2011, breakout sessions at the MN Gerontology conference. Attendees are administrators and care professionals across the senior services spectrum. At each session, no less than 80 individuals attended.
* In 2009 and 2010, presentations at the annual Wisdom Steps conference hosted by the Department of Human Services (DHS) Indian Heath Division. Attendees for each were approximately 25.

1. Mail Distribution Activities (all occur each year)   
   - Bi-annual doctor mailer. All optometrists and ophthalmologists in the state receive either a packet detailing senior services or post card reminding them of services. Anecdotally, SSU reports a spike in calls immediately following mailer.  
   - Approximately 250 “postcards” are distributed via the Dept. of Public safety each year in letters that are sent to seniors receiving notice of revocation of driving privileges.  
   - In 2010, all nursing home and permanent long-term care facilities received notice from SSB regarding the policy to no longer serve permanent residents directly. There were 381 facilities who received the mailer, which included a DVD designed to train staff to work with visually impaired and blind residents. The mailer elicited an additional request from no less than 20 facilities for further copies of the DVD and Communication Center materials.  
   - In 2009 and 2010 a mailer was created to offer professional, continuing education unit (CEU) worthy staff trainings by SSU staffers Margee Pfannenstein (St Cloud), Diane Swanson (Rochester) and George Gross (Duluth 2009 only). Margee facilitated 5 trainings, Diane facilitated 2 trainings and George facilitated 2 trainings.   
   - In 2009 and 2011, a mailer containing info on SSU was sent to 81 Home Care agencies  
   - Mailers are sent annually to senior centers, Area Agencies on Aging and community programs as identified.
2. In 2009 and 2010, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars were used to produce a training video for long-term care staff as a way to lighten the numbers of long-term care residents in need of direct service from the SSU. There was a release event sponsored by Ecumen Senior Housing of MN attended by 120 various regional senior services providers.
3. Outreach presentations: no less than 75 between 2009-2011 to groups that include service clubs, senior centers, senior housing resident groups, low vision groups, professional senior providers, Senior Linkage professionals and other clubs.

Communication Center:

1. Yearly mailers to all eye doctors (twice annually to approximately 1000 offices)
2. In 2009, coordinated and facilitated Radio Talking Book (RTB) anniversary parties in St Paul, St Cloud, Rochester, Fergus Falls, Duluth, Grand Rapids and Mankato. At least 300 attendees comprising customers, civic leaders, local legislators and Communication Center (CC) volunteers.
3. In 2010 and 2011, attended a resource event to highlight CC service to PACER parents. Approximately 50 attendees total.
4. In 2010 and 2011, presentations at the annual Metropolitan Library Service Agency Annual Conference. Attendees were all librarians in the Twin Cities Metro (about 100).
5. Produce Quarterly Volunteer Newsletter with RTB volunteer Joan Lindusky distributed to all of the nearly 700 volunteers.
6. Coordinated a speaker’s circuit featuring Charlie Boone (RTB volunteer) and Wally Hinz (CC customer). Ed Lecher and these two volunteers have presented to 17 service clubs since the beginning of 2009.
7. In 2009 and 2010, SSB had a booth in the Education Building for the 11 days of the state fair yielding dozens of new and qualified volunteers (also promoted WDU and SSU).
8. In 2010 and 2011 attended and spoke at the yearly conference of Special Educational teachers to promote Audio Services. Total attendance each was approximately 100 educators.

Workforce Development Unit Activities:

1. Participated in the St Cloud Veteran’s Administration resource fair in 2009, 2010 and 2011, providing SSB awareness materials to no less than 200 veterans.
2. Participated in the Minneapolis Veteran’s Administration resource event in 2009 and 2010 reaching approximately 100 veterans.
3. In 2011, conducted a needs assessment to gauge and plan activities to reach out to minority populations. In the process, interviewed representatives from 12 community-based organizations. Submitted this information in October 2011 to the minority outreach committee, which will use the information to formulate an outreach plan.
4. See doctor mailer under Senior Services (The mailer is primarily meant to highlight the SSU and CC, but info on Voc. Rehab. is included.)
5. Designed a booklet for placement staff to provide to employers. This booklet contains resumes and is updated quarterly. It has been distributed to companies upon request and used by staff as a reference.
6. **TRANSITION SERVICES**

2011 Goal and Priority #5: Increase the number of referrals of transition-age students to SSB.This goal and priority was added in FY10 with the intention of increasing not only the number of referrals of transition-aged students, but also the number who are referred between ages 14-16. The initial measure of whether or not this goal has been met is simply the number of individuals ages 14-21 who were determined eligible during the FFY. Data has been kept and reviewed on the number of eligible individuals by age group to determine whether referrals are being made at a younger age, as is the focus. In FFY2010, 52 individuals between the ages of 14-21 were determined eligible for services. This compares to 57 in FFY2009, 48 in FFY2008 and 38 in FFY2007. The general strategies for meeting this goal were all implemented and may have had an impact in achieving this goal; however, the strategies specific to outreach to minority and DeafBlind populations were addressed in the goals specific to those unique populations.

PRIORITY #2.3: Increase the percentage of students who apply at ages 14 and 15 from the baseline of 39% of all applicants between the ages of 14-22 in FFY2009 to 45% of all applicants between the ages of 14-22 in FFY2011.This goalwas not achieved as only 32.4% of the applicants in FFY2011 were 14 and 15 years of age from the baseline of 39% of all applicants between the ages of 14-22 in FFY2009. One must consider that service provision was substantially impacted by the state shut down in July of 2011.

Below are the strategies for meeting this priority as well as the progress that has been made in achieving them:

1. Continue working statewide with Special Education teachers, teachers of the blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind and other IEP team members in designated school districts to facilitate regular information meetings with SSB counselors.

With the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) hire of Kristin Oien as MDE Specialist, this strategy has really blossomed. The impetus for this strategy of course stemmed from the intention to strengthen our relationship with Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) teachers and be informed of IEP meetings. Since this strategy has been met, removal can be considered as mechanisms are now in place to facilitate regular information meetings with SSB counselors and teachers.

Examples of how we have met this strategy:

* SSB conducted breakfast meetings with individual BVI teachers to exchange information and discuss concerns (2009). These meetings were well received and marked the beginning of building relationships with these important stakeholders.
* SSB representatives are now invited to State Vision Network (SVN) meetings regularly.
* Kristin has included SSB on the Summer Transition Committee (STP) Steering Committee.
* SSB has been co-facilitating BVI special interest brain storming groups at SVN meetings.
* We anticipate co-hosting an IPE/IEP workshop for SSB WFD staff, BVI teachers and IEP team members to better understand each other’s processes and form a cohesive transition of students at high school graduation.
* SSB’s relationship with Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) has been strengthened through enhanced relationships with John Davis (Director), Connie Telshow (Transition Coordinator) and Ken Treblehorn (AT Teacher).
* SSB is now a presenter and co-facilitator at the MSAB Family Transition Weekend.
* Kristin Oien and Diane Dohnalik (teacher) are permanent and active member of the SCR-B’s Transition Committee.
* The Transition Timeline was a joint endeavor with SSB and teachers. The Timeline is a tool for career development that advises students, families and teachers of SSB's expectation for each year of high school. The emphasis is on assisting the student to obtain work or volunteer experiences, conduct job shadows and informational interviews. It is being used by SSB counselors and distributed to BVI teachers and families.

1. By November 1, 2011, SSB will evaluate the Information Fairs hosted to date to determine their effectiveness.  Based on the result of this evaluation, SSB will develop a format for communicating information about SSB to transition students and their families not later than December 31, 2011.  This format will be implemented by June 30, 2012.

SSB 101 was a parent and student eventdesigned to introduce families with children age 14+ to SSB and its services. It was held 3 times between 2009 and 2010 with low attendance**.** In 2010, the plan was to hold 3 sessions in northern, southern and metro regions to make it convenient for families. Unfortunately, there was little response from families and teachers.

Based on this experience, SSB 101 has been redesigned:

* Present SSB 101 mini version to families at the MSAB Family Transition Weekend in January 2012.
* SSB 101 was incorporated into the STP program during the summer of 2011 and will be repeated in the future because of its success.
* Propose a mini version of SSB 101 in 2012 to Blind Inc’s Post-Secondary Readiness and Empowerment Program.
* Produce a special intake folder for families of students applying in high school. It will be a transition focused folder with materials all pertaining to transition activities. Expected completion date of folder – March 2012.

There are also plans to offer SSB 101 in alternative formats:

* Produce a CD or DVD of SSB 101.
* Put a link on the SSB website to it.
* Put copies of the DVD or CD in the special intake folders
* Share the video at Transition Toolkit presentations
* Ask organizations such as the National Library Service (NLS), National Federation of the Blind (NFB), American Council of the Blind (ACB), Vision Loss Resources (VLR), Blindness: Learning In New Directions (Blind Inc.), and the Duluth Lighthouse for the Bling to put a SSB Transition Student link on their websites
* Have MDE put the SSB Transition Student link on their website
* Include SSB 101 in conference materials provided to events conducted by National Association of Parents with Visually Impaired Children (NAPVI), NFB, ACB, VLR young adult programming, Blind Inc’s Teen Night, Blind Prep and Buddy Program.
* Place SSB 101 on YouTube.

3. Monitor outcomes of enrichment activities beginning March 2012 to determine whether the goal of each activity was met.  Enrichment activities will be reviewed every six months between March 2012 and October 2014 to monitor impact on success of each student and determine future direction of provision of enrichment activities for students.

A database was developed in September of 2011 to track students’ work related activities. There is a rudimentary chart from the summer of 2011 of each student’s involvement in work related activities. It is difficult to gather this data through our database and efforts will be made to improve the efficiency of conducting this task. This is a topic and development area rich in growth opportunities.

4. Between May 2012 and July 2012, evaluate the contents of the Transition Timeline and, based on feedback from counselors, revise as necessary.  Review changes to Transition Timeline with counselors prior to September 2012 and implement revised document not later than September 30, 2012.

It was introduced to staff at the October 2011 WFD meeting. At the March 2012 WFD meeting, the Transition Timeline will be reviewed and counselors will be encouraged to continue its use with their transition students.

1. **CLOSURE OUTCOMES:**

Through the Region 5 Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center, SSB enlisted the services of doctoral student, Sukyeong Pi, at Southern Illinois University to evaluate SSB's aggregate customer data (RSA 911) for FFY2004 through FFY2008 to complete this analysis. During this period of time, SSB closed an average of 390 customer cases per fiscal year. With regards to types of closure, an average of 26.4% of the customers achieved an employment outcome. This successful outcome rate was significantly lower than other VR agencies that primarily serve people with visual impairments. In FFY 2008, only 28.2% of SSB customers achieved successful closure compared to a rate of 49.1% for all other VR agencies.

The report attempted to identify the reason for this discrepancy by investigating the relationship between two categories of independent variables (customer characteristics and type of services received), and VR outcomes as a dependent variable. Of the customers who exited SSB in FFY 2008, 56% were male (versus 53% for all other blind agency). SSB clearly served more white customers with blindness and relatively younger population compared to other blind agencies in that year. In addition, a higher percentage of SSB customers were Social Security beneficiaries and not working at application. The analysis revealed there is a link between a higher level of education and success in achieving an employment outcome.

The results of a logistic regression analysis revealed that racial minority customers were less likely to achieve an employment outcome compared with white customers and that Social Security beneficiaries were less likely to obtain or maintain a job a closure. Having a higher level of education, being older and/or working at application were more related to a successful outcome. In other words, a customer with a college degree was 1.93 times more likely to have an employment outcome, then a customer without a high school diploma and relevant certificate.

In summary, the following customer characteristics might account for SSB's lower successful rehabilitation rate: SSB has served more customers with blindness, relatively younger populations, Social Security beneficiaries and unemployed customers at application than other blind agencies. The report suggested that SSB would need to develop special strategies for the customers who have these individual characteristics.

Of the relationships between the types of services received and VR outcomes revealed the following: customers who received technical assistance services were 2.9 times more likely to have an employment outcome than those who did not. Technical assistance, rehabilitation technology, diagnosis and treatment, on-the-job training, job search and job placement services were significantly related to having a successful employment outcome. On the other hand, receiving VR counseling and guidance, job readiness training and transportation services were more associated to unsuccessful closure.

In addition, an analysis was conducted by SSB management of cases closed as unable to locate and refused services, to identify any trends or issues with policy or practice that need to be addressed. Indeed, the analysis revealed that the practice of using an interrupted status in managing vocational rehabilitation case files had not been used for several fiscal years in an effort to manage the size of counselors’ caseloads by closing cases after there had been no activity with the client for a time. The use of the interrupted status was reinstituted in approximately 2008 to accurately reflect the fact that customers were temporarily unable to proceed towards the accomplishment of the rehabilitation goals for disability related reasons. Since that time, the number of unsuccessful closures has decreased and SSB’s rehabilitation rate has increased.

**B. Incidence of Disability**

The task of estimating the incidence of blindness is an inexact science, often requiring the extrapolation of data from more generic population estimates. A good place to start is with the population of the United States and Minnesota which in 2010 was 308.745 and 5.303 million respectively.

According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), current estimates of the number of people who are visually impaired vary greatly by source and method of measurement, as well as by the inclusion criteria applied. However, the NEI estimates there are 937,000 individuals with blindness over the age of 40 and 2.361,000 with low vision in that age range, totaling 3.298,000 or 1% of the general population.

The article, Causes and Prevalence of Visual Impairment Among Adults in the United States ([Congdon N](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Congdon%20N%22%5BAuthor%5D), [O'Colmain B](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22O'Colmain%20B%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Klaver CC](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Klaver%20CC%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Klein R](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Klein%20R%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Muñoz B](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Mu%C3%B1oz%20B%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Friedman DS](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Friedman%20DS%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Kempen J](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Kempen%20J%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Taylor HR](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Taylor%20HR%22%5BAuthor%5D), [Mitchell P](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Mitchell%20P%22%5BAuthor%5D); [Eye Diseases Prevalence Research Group](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%22Eye%20Diseases%20Prevalence%20Research%20Group%22%5BCorporate%20Author%5D)), estimates there are 937,000 Americans beyond the age of 40 who were blind (US definition). An additional 2.4 million Americans had low vision. Again, this equates to 1% of the general population. These numbers are very similar to those from NEI, and makes one wonder if this wasn’t the source of that projection. Due to the aging of the baby boom generation, the number of blind persons in the US is projected to increase by 58% to 1.6 million by 2020, with a similar rise projected for low vision.

Applying a percentage of 1% to Minnesota’s population suggests 53,030 individuals may be eligible for SSB’s services compared to approximately 1000 Minnesotans served annually by the Workforce Development Unit.

The 2011 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium includes a wealth of information. It projects Minnesota's resident population to be 5,668,211 in 2015 and in 2020, 5,900,769, a 4% increase. Citizens with vision disabilities ages 18 – 64 living in the community in Minnesota is estimated to be 30,509 currently. Dividing this number by the population of MN results in .0057%. Furthermore, 14,553 of 30,509 or 29.9% are employed.

The American Foundation for the Blind reports the following information from the 2008 American Community Survey. In Minnesota, there were 68,028 or 1.28 % with vision loss; 31,204 were male and 36,824 female. In terms of age: 1,474 were under the age of 5, 3,921 between 5-17: 30,488 between 18-64, 8,287 between 65-74 and 23,858, 75 and older.

According to the National Federation of the Blind, there are 1.3 million legally blind persons in the US (.42%). (National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey - Disability Supplement, 1994 and 1995.) There are 93,600 blind school age children (based on NPTP survey: Kirchner & Diament, 1999a updated: October 2002). This number includes deaf-blind school age children: 10,800   
(based on the Deafblind Census: Baldwin & Hembree, 1998 updated: October 2002). The number of blind seniors, 65 and over is 3.5% of the population 65 and over or 787,691. (AFB Sept./Oct. JVIB & Chiang, et al., 1992, Milbank Quarterly)

The number of students in Minnesota who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind is estimated by using the unduplicated child count maintained by the Minnesota Department of Education which is for school funding purposes. A student can only be counted once based on their primary disability. If a student is multiply disabled and blindness is not considered primary, this would result in an undercounting of those students who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.

In 2010, there were a total of 415 students, (.325% of all students classified as handicapped disability and 046% of total student enrollment) listed as visually impaired or DeafBlind, 113 of whom were transition age. In 2011, the child count showed a total of 435 students listed as visually impaired or DeafBlind, 104 of whom were transition age. Comparing this number to the total number of transition aged students referred during the past four fiscal years (194) and the 52 referred in 2010, suggests SSB and its partners have improved at identifying and soliciting applications from this population, yet continued efforts in this area are warranted.

Again, it is important to note that the students referenced above are those whose primary eligibility category is BVI, so multi-disabled students who are also BVI may be receiving transition services through SSB who are not included in this count.

The Federal Quota Registration of Blind Students under the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind is an annual census conducted by the Minnesota Resource Center: Blind/VI for the American Printing House. In 2010 and 2011, the most recent year for which data is available, 105 and 95 blind and visually impaired students from grades 9 through 11 were eligible to receive educational materials through that program.

The 2012 Annual Report by the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access projects that the annual growth rate of people with disabilities will outpace population growth. A 1.3% annual increase in the population of individuals with visual impairments is anticipated through 2010, led only by persons with hearing and ambulatory disabilities.

**Minnesota State Survey**

In 2002, Minnesota SSB was presented with an opportunity to participate in the Minnesota State Survey conducted by the University of Minnesota Center for Survey Research. The 2011 Survey was conducted from October to December of 2011 and included a total of 804 telephone interviews with a response rate of 27% for the landline sample and only 12% for the cell phone sample. A pattern of declining response rates are a national concern for survey research organizations.

The Minnesota Survey is an “omnibus” survey where individual organizations define and pay for the questions that are of interest to them. From 2002 to 2003, the following question was asked:

1. Does anyone in your household have a visual impairment? This means that even when they are wearing glasses or contact lenses, they are not able to see better than 20/60 in their best eye?

This question was changed in 2004 and has been asked every year since:

1. Does anyone in your household have a vision problem that makes it difficult for them to read material in regular size print such as books, magazines or newspapers even when they are wearing glasses or contact lenses?

In 2008, three additional questions were added:

1. Has this vision problem caused you\this person\you or this person to have difficulty with finding or keeping a job?
2. Have you ever heard of an organization called State Services for the Blind?
3. Have you or anyone else in your household ever used their services?

In 2011, the following question was added:

1. Has this vision problem caused you\this person\you or this person to feel less confident about continuing to live in your current housing?

**Minnesota State Survey Findings**

Since 2002, approximately 805 individuals in Minnesota were selected randomly to participate in the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate either yes or no to the questions and to apply the question either to themselves, someone else in the household or both.

An average of 4.7% of the respondents answered Q2, above, in the affirmative. Of the respondents, 4.4% indicated that someone else in the household had this difficulty. It is thought that this question may be the best indicator of those who may potentially be eligible for SSB services as responses to Q3 are much more dependent on the current state of the economy. Applying these percentages to Minnesota's population of 5.303 million suggests there are between 233,000 in 249,000 Minnesotans who are unable to read regular size print even when they are wearing corrective lenses. Startling, yet not surprising considering the incidence of visual impairment among seniors and the substantial increase in this population.

1. **Service Data and Results for Individuals with Significant Disabilities Title I, Part B**

Since FFY2008, the number of Minnesotans served by SSB's Workforce Development Unit has remained remarkably consistent. In FFY2011, 1017 Minnesotans were served versus 1015 in FFY2008, with a slight increase of approximately 5% in FFY’s 2009 and 2010. Services to blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind individuals are provided by 16 qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors and approximately 25 “support” staff who work directly with our customers to affect their vocational rehabilitation. While the majority of these staff are housed at SSB's office on University Avenue in St. Paul, statewide coverage is insured with staff located strategically at prominent economic hubs throughout Greater Minnesota.

The rehabilitation needs of Minnesotans is ascertained by an analysis of VR caseload data, federal standards and indicators and customer satisfaction survey results.

1. **Vocational Rehabilitation Caseload Data Highlights**

Highlights for the Workforce Development Unit:

* the number of successful employment outcomes has remained consistent: 78, 80 and 81 in FFY’s 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively.
* the number of unpaid homemaker closures continues at a low rate of approximately 5 per year since 2008.
* unsuccessful closures after plan has decreased markedly from 105 in FFY2008 to 36 in FFY2011.
* unsuccessful closures before plan has remained consistent since FFY2008 with 70, 80, 64 and 69 through FFY2011.
* the difference in weekly salary from application has again been consistent since FFY2008 with fluctuations of no more than 3.6%, to a rate of $348.94 in FFY2011.
* the average weekly wage at closure for full-time work increased significantly from FFY2009 to 2010 from $16.85 to $19.86, a 15.2% increase.
* the average weekly wage at closure for part-time work also increased significantly from $13.85 to $15.04, an 8% increase.

1. **Case Service Expenditure and Service Provision Patterns – Title I, Part B**

Below are case service expenditures, listed by the total amount authorized, for FFY 2009, 2010 and 2011. The ordinal ranking of each service indicates service provision, defined as services provided to the most number of customers during that fiscal year.

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2009:

3. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $1,235,373.14

2. Postsecondary Training – $618,384.27

4. Maintenance – $535,167.32

6. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$279,042.53

9. Job Placement – $258,313.33

5. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $237,984.55

10. Basic Academic, Remedial or Literacy Training - $173,596.00

7. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $171,931.51

8. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living –$157,265.41

1. Transportation – $152,700.44

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2010:

3. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $1,441,401.58

2. Postsecondary Training – $728,221.16

4. Maintenance – $625.005.92

7. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$396,001.35

9. Job Placement – $359,013.30

6. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $286,196.10

5. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $255,804.39

1. Transportation – $202,116.30

10. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living – $198,640.32

8. Vocational and Other Non-medical Assessment – $198,407.27

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2011:

3. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $1,203,938.12

2. Postsecondary Training – $737,874.44

9. Job Placement – $618,821.23

4. Maintenance – $595,401.91

10. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living – $507,486.85

8. Vocational and Other Non-medical Assessment – $314,583.27

5. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$266,650.50

6. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $209,366.95

1. Transportation – $178,713.37

7. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $174,025.31

There was a significant difference in service provision, with the exception of adjustment to blindness training, between all customers and those from minority backgrounds all three years. The provision of post-secondary training was ranked second for all customers in 2009 and 2010, but only 9th and 10th for minorities, perhaps suggesting their desire to enter the labor market quickly or language/academic barriers. However, there was a marked change in 2011 as provision of post-secondary training ranked 2nd and 3rd for all and minority customers respectively. This trend also held true for the provision of placement services. One service that was required more by this population was assessment for activities of daily living.

The average expenditures per customer for each group during FFY2009, 2010 and 21011 were:

2009 2010 2011

Title I – $4,304.07 $5,018.67 $5,490.86

Most Significant Disability – $3,976.14 $4,676.22 $4,723.96

DeafBlind – $8,435.94 $9,702.48 $12,309.24

Minority – $6,602.45 $7,007.66 $8,572.66

Adjustment to blindness training is critical to increase the independence of blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind Minnesotans. The use of this service among these populations was examined due to the fact it is one of the top expenditures of case service funds and most frequently used service. The average cost per customer for adjustment to blindness training over FFY2009, 2011 and 2011 was $5,657.02. Costs for other groups were: $5,492.84 for most significant disability, $4,614.11 for customers who are DeafBlind and $23,076.67 for customers from minority backgrounds.

At the February 23, 2012 meeting of the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, testimony was heard regarding a possible shortage of rehabilitation teachers, particularly in greater Minnesota. Lacking data on this subject, the Needs Assessment Task Force recommends that further study is warranted to determine if this constitutes a gap in service.

1. **SSB Performance on Federal Standards and Indicators**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has established standards and indicators for measuring vocational rehabilitation program performance in the United States. Standard 1 pertains to employment outcomes and Standard 2 pertains to the service rate between minority and nonminority populations. RSA requires that each agency pass 4 of the 6 indicators and 2 of 3 Primary Indicators on Standard 1. In FFY2011, SSB met 5 of 6 Indicators and all three Primary Indicators in Standard 1. SSB has a long history of consistently meeting the three primary indicators.

The federal indicators, required performance level and SSB's achievement are listed below. The acronym DSU stands for Designated State Unit.

**1.1** **The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exited the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** Performance in the current period must equal or exceed performance in the previous period. In FFY2011 SSB assisted three more individuals to obtain employment than in FFY2010

**1.2 Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** The required performance level is 68.9%. In FFY2011, SSB fell short of this measure, achieving 59.19%.

**1.3 Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** SSB exceeded the required performance level of 35.4% by achieving a level of 94.41%.

**1.4** **Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** SSB achieved a performance level of 97.52%, exceeding the requirement of 89.0%.

**1.5** **The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State’s average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, “State Average Annual Pay” for the most recent available year).**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** SSB surpassed the required performance level of .59 by achieving a level of .74.

**1.6** **Of all individuals** **who exit the VR program in competitive, self or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** SSB achieved a level of 33.59%, exceeding the requirement of 30.4%

**2.1** **The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds.**

**DSU Required Performance Level:** This ratio is not calculated if fewer than 100 persons from minority backgrounds exit the program during the fiscal year. The number of minorities exiting SSB unsuccessfully after plan development has decreased since FFY2009 with 48 closures in that year, 39 in 2010 and 31 in 2011. However, successful employment outcomes for this population has remained constant since 2009 with 11, 11 and 10 closures during the past three fiscal years.

1. **Current SSB/SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

## The CSGP Committee’s evaluation of progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities is included in the 2011 VR Effectiveness Report and is reported below:

## Progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities:

GOAL #1: Improve number and percent of closed cases achieving employment after receiving services.

**PRIORITY #1.1: Employment Outcomes**—By the end of FFY 2012, SSB will meet RSA Indicator 1.1 by increasing for the two year period (FFY2011 and FFY 2012) the number of individuals achieving employment over the base period of FFY2010-FFY2011.

**During FFY 2011 and 2012, the strategies for meeting this priority are—**

* By August 31 of each year, each counselor and their supervisor will meet to review the potential of each customer for successful employment by the end of the next FFY. Based on determinations made during this review, supervisors will set individual outcome goals for each counselor. Between January 1 and January 31 of each year, supervisors and counselors will review the projections, taking into account any changes in the caseload. As appropriate, the supervisor will revise the outcome goal. Supervisors will monitor progress of designated customers toward their employment outcome during required monthly meetings with each counselor and provide assistance as needed. Recognition of counselors who met and who exceeded their individual outcomes goals will occur at the October staff meeting each year.

STATUS: This strategy is ongoing. For this year, due to the government shutdown, the time frame for the meetings to review potential for successful employment outcomes was shifted to November 30, 2011, rather than August 31. Additionally, the staff recognition has been occurring at the February all-staff meetings rather than the October ones.

* Each counseling supervisor will ensure each WFD counselor attends Labor Market Information training at least once every two years. Counselors newly employed by SSB will attend the training within one year of hire. Because LMI data provides counselors with information about current and future jobs by region of the state, they will be better able to provide customers with information to assist them in choosing a job goal in a high demand area. Ensuring counselors have current labor market information to share with customers is expected to result in an increase in the number of applicants who achieve an employment outcome.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

* Data on the effectiveness of the three job development staff hired with ARRA funding will be analyzed beginning January 1, 2011. The analysis and any resulting plan for changes to the Workforce Development Unit staff allocation will be set for implementation by March 1, 2011.

STATUS: This strategy was completed and resulted in the hiring of two full-time job placement staff.

* Staff new to SSB have little, if any, experience with blindness, and a paucity of understanding of the capabilities of persons competent in the skills of blindness, Therefore all new WDU staff will complete Introduction to Blindness —Phase 1 and Phase 2 training on the essential aspects of blindness and visual impairment within three months of hire.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

**PRIORITY #1.2: Employment Rate**— By the end of FFY 2012 SSB will have made progress toward meeting RSA Indicator 1.2 by increasing the percentage of persons closed achieving employment after receiving services from the FFY09 baseline of 45%.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. Continue ongoing data analysis of successful and unsuccessful closures. On a quarterly basis assess and, as appropriate, develop and implement changes in service provision which address areas of specific concern.

STATUS: This strategy is ongoing. During this fiscal year, two particular changes were made which are expected to have a positive effect on outcomes: 1) The initial in-take interview is now to be conducted by a rehabilitation counselor within thirty days of initial contact; 2) An "Interrupted" status has been implemented to reflect the fact that services may sometimes be interrupted for various reasons when an actual case closure is not appropriate.

1. By December 31, 2011, develop, and by March 31, 2012, implement a comprehensive program to facilitate the success of customers interested in self-employment /entrepreneurship as an employment outcome.

STATUS: This strategy is ongoing.

1. By August 1, 2011, data on the employment outcomes of customers who participated in an internship, job trial or on-the-job training experience between June 2010 and June 2011 will be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of these employment strategies. Based on the results of the data analysis, procedures to improve these experiences will be developed and implemented by September 30, 2011.

STATUS: Due to staff transitions and other circumstances, this priority was not met this year. The activity will occur in FFY2012 according to the above timeline.

1. By no later than March 1, 2011 include in new customer orientation process information about and means to access the mentorship and/or peer counseling programs of the various consumer organizations. Such programs are one way for applicants to facilitate their adjustment to blindness and develop an understanding of the viability of competitive employment for them.

STATUS: SSB staff engaged in this effort indicated that no formal peer counseling or mentorship programs exist, and that organizations are being encouraged to develop them. Dialog continues.

**FFY2012 GOALS, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES**

**GOAL #1: Improve number and percent of closed cases achieving employment after receiving services.**

**PRIORITY #1.1: Employment Outcomes**—By the end of FFY 2013, SSB will meet RSA Indicator 1.1 by increasing for the two year period (FFY2012 and FFY 2013) the number of individuals achieving employment over the base period of FFY2010-FFY2011.

**During FFY 2012 and 2013, the strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. By August 31 of each year, each counselor and their supervisor will meet to review the potential of each customer for successful employment by the end of the next FFY. Each counselor with at least two years of experience will be expected to identify at least six individuals for whom successful closure is realistic during the next FFY.

Between January 1 and January 31 of each year, supervisors and counselors will review the projections, taking into account any changes in the caseload. As appropriate, the supervisor will revise the outcome goal and customers identified as potential successful closures. Supervisors will monitor progress of designated customers toward their employment outcome during required monthly meetings with each counselor and provide assistance as needed. Recognition of counselors who met and who exceeded their individual outcomes goals will occur at the February staff meeting each year.

1. Each counseling supervisor will ensure each WFD counselor attends training in utilizing Labor Market Information, MySkillsMyFuture, ISEEK and other websites which provide relevant information regarding the labor market. Counselors will attend training in the utilization of each of these websites at least once every two years. Counselors newly employed by SSB will attend training in each of these websites within one year of hire.

Because there are multiple websites which provide counselors and customers with a wide range of information about current and future jobs, knowledge of these websites will provide customers with a broader range of information to assist them in choosing a job goal in a high demand area. Ensuring counselors have knowledge of the various tools available which provide current labor market information is expected to result in an increase in the number of applicants who achieve an employment outcome.

1. Staff new to SSB have little, if any, experience with blindness, and a paucity of understanding of the capabilities of persons competent in the skills of blindness, Therefore all new WFD staff will successfully complete Introduction to Blindness —Phase 1 and Phase 2 training on the essential aspects of blindness and visual impairment within three months of hire and before any caseload activity is assigned.

**PRIORITY #1.2: Employment Rate**— SSB’s performance on RSA Indicator 1.2 will increase annually from the 2010 baseline of 50%, reflecting an increase in the percentage of persons closed achieving employment after receiving services.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. Continue ongoing data analysis of successful and unsuccessful closures. On a quarterly basis

assess and, as appropriate, develop and implement changes in service provision which address

areas of specific concern.

2. By December 31, 2011, develop, and by March 31, 2012, implement a comprehensive program to facilitate the success of customers interested in self-employment /entrepreneurship as an employment outcome. Strategies will be included in the FY2013 Goals and Priorities reflective of decisions made by March 31, 2012.

3. Between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012, data will be maintained to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures implemented to improve internship, job trial or on-the-job training experiences of SSB customers. Not later than October 31, 2012, any changes to existing procedures will be completed and implemented.

4. By September 30, 2013,SSB will develop a method to evaluate the effectiveness of providing customers with mentorship and/or peer counseling information on their adjustment to blindness and their understanding of the viability of competitive employment for them

It is salient to this needs assessment to include input from other organizations within MN concerned with the employment of persons with disabilities. The Fourth Summit of the Employment First Coalition was held on September 30, 2011, as a continuation of the dialogues begun in 2009 and 2010 by the Minnesota Employment Policy Initiative (MEPI) around the question, “What will it take to double employment of Minnesotans with disabilities by 2015?” The 2011 MEPI Final Report identified 21 consensus recommendations across disability groups to promote employment as the preferred outcome of Minnesotans with disabilities. These recommendations can be viewed at http://www.mn-epi.org/docs/MEPIFinalReport2011.pdf.

Summit IV brought together 20 disability advocacy organizations to develop a collaborative action plan to prioritize and implement those consensus recommendations.

As one of the final activities of the Summit, participants also selected their top priorities for future action from the additional recommendations in the MEPI Final Report. They identified the following as those priorities:

* Increase funding for public transportation, including Metro Mobility

and other specialized transportation options, to expand the areas served and the times

transportation is available.

* Ensure young adults with disabilities graduate directly and seamlessly into competitive jobs or postsecondary education.
* Redesign transition services for young adults aged 18-21 to produce better employment and postsecondary education outcomes through interagency collaboration.
* Conduct statewide public education about the economic benefits of competitive employment to Minnesotans with disabilities and the resources available to provide individualized guidance about maximizing earnings without jeopardizing the safety net of sustainable health care and independent living assistance.
* Incorporate customized employment strategies as an alternative to traditional job development approaches to address the many obstacles encountered by jobseekers with disabilities.

1. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities**

**Including their Need for Supported Employment**

A very high percentage of SSB customers are individuals with a significant disability. However, on average, only 20.93% have met SSB's criteria as an individual with the most significant disability during the past three fiscal years.

An individual with a most significant disability is an eligible individual who:

* has a severe physical or mental impairment that results in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in five or more of the following functional areas: mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, work skills, interpersonal skills or job-seeking skills; and
* is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time.

1. **Case Service Expenditure and Service Provision**

Below are case service expenditures, listed by the total amount authorized, for FFY 2009, 2010 and 2011. The ordinal ranking of each service indicates service provision, defined as services provided to the most number of customers during that fiscal year.

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2009:

1. Maintenance – $526,692.13

2. Transportation – $523,079.13

3. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $340,795.26

4. Postsecondary Training – $125,083.84

10. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living –$103,634.04

9. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$65,836.83

6. Job Placement – $51,163.75

5. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $50,146.75

8. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $45,007.55

7. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $38,449.99

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2010:

2. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $372,145.97

3. Maintenance – $171,395.37

7. Postsecondary Training – $119,092.61

8. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$81,649.91

5. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $81,171.88

9. Vocational & Other Non-medical Assessments - $76,222.38

6. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $49,801.81

11. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living – $44,591.00

1. Transportation – $42,042.44

4. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $42, 012.14

10. Vendor payment for Textbooks and Supplies - $12,760.29

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2011:

3. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $250,795.44

4. Postsecondary Training – $191,553.15.61

2. Maintenance – $153,984.98

7. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living – $149,926.78

5. Vocational & Other Non-medical Assessments - $84,446.62

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9. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$76.006.39

6. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $61,218.37

11. Job Placement – $50,955.50

1. Transportation – $38,818.35

12. Vendor payment for Internship/Job Trial - $37,025.82

10. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $33,691.37

8. Equipment and Supplies for Assessments - $21,407.07

A review of this data reveals that maintenance, transportation, adjustment to blindness training and postsecondary training were the four most commonly utilized services. Reader/driver/notetaker/ interpreters was listed as an expenditure in FFY 2009 and 2010 but interestingly, not in 2011. In 2011, vendor payment for internship/job trial was ranked 12th but did not appear in previous years: perhaps a promising development because of the high correlation between these types of experiences and attainment of employment.

Customers under a supported employment plan are considered to be those with the most significant disability. The number of customers in supported employment plans in federal fiscal years 2009, 2010 and 2011, were 16, 15 and 17 respectively.

1. **Findings**

Over the past three fiscal years, an average of 20.93% of SSB's customers met SSB's criteria as an individual with the most significant disability and accounted for 23.21% of expenditures.

Adjustment to blindness training is critical to this population to increase their personal and vocational independence. Over the past three fiscal years, 24.49% of customers with the most significant disabilities received adjustment to blindness training as compared to 21.77% of all workforce development customers.

Average expenditures per customer for all those served within Workforce Development was $4,929.96 over FFY2009, 2010 and 2011 as average expenditures per customer for those with the most significant disabilities during that same time period was $10,109.38.

1. **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**
2. **Minnesota WFC Customer Satisfaction Survey**

Since 2000, Minnesota State Services for the Blind has conducted surveys to gauge customer satisfaction. These surveys are either conducted singularly by specific units within the agency or jointly with other partners’ programs within Minnesota's Workforce Center (WFC) System.

The joint survey is entitled the Minnesota WFC Customer Satisfaction Survey. Minnesota contracts with the Strategic Research Group (SRG), an external vendor, to ensure objectivity and greater validity in interviewing. SRG conducts telephone surveys quarterly. Approximately 290 SSB customers are interviewed annually.

Of the following 11 questions, the first five are asked to gauge customer satisfaction with all partners’ programs within MN’s WFC System. Questions six through nine were added in 2010 in response to a suggestion made by Minnesota's Office of the Legislative Auditor. The last two questions, ten and eleven, are specific to SSB and were added in 2009.

1. Utilizing a scale of 1 to 10 where "1" means "Very Dissatisfied" and "10" means "Very Satisfied," what is your overall satisfaction with the services provided?

2. Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the services, to what extent have the services met your expectations? "1" now means "Falls short of your expectations" and "10" means "Exceeds your expectations."

3. Now think of the ideal program for people in your circumstances. How well do you think the services you received compare with the ideal set of services? "1" now means "Not very close to the ideal" and "10" means "Very close to the ideal."

4. How satisfied are you that the staff understands your needs? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

5. Think about any times that you asked staff for help. How satisfied are you that they responded in a reasonable amount of time? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied, or have you never asked for help?

6. How satisfied are you that the services you received helped you find a job? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or it does not apply to your situation?

7. How satisfied are you that the services helped you with career planning? These services may have included information about jobs that will be in demand now or in the future, or learning about the education and skills needed for different types of jobs. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or it does not apply to your situation?

8. How satisfied are you that the services helped you connect with employers who were hiring? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or it does not apply to your situation?

9. How satisfied are you that the services helped you improve your job-seeking skills? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or it does not apply to your situation?

10. How satisfied are you that you were given enough information to make good choices for your employment plan? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

11. How satisfied are you that you had an active role in decisions about your services? Are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

1. **Findings**

Questions one, two and three of the Customer Satisfaction Survey are reported on a scale from 1 to 10. The results from these three questions were 7.78, 7.36 and 7.37 respectively from April of 2009 to March of 2010 and 7.73, 7.44 and 7.40 from October 2010 to September 2011. The results are very consistent.

The results for the remainder of the questions are answered in percentages from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The results (satisfied or very satisfied) from the most recent reporting period available, October 2010 to September 2011, were:

* staff understood customer needs: 89%
* staff responded in a reasonable amount of time: 80%
* services helped find a job: 40% (note that this question did not apply to 44% of the respondent’s situation)
* services helped with career planning: 64% (22% did not apply to respondent’s situation)
* services helped you connect with employers who are hiring: 35% (47% did not apply to respondent’s situation)
* services helped improve job-seeking skills 56% (31% did not apply)
* provided enough information to make good choices for your employment plan: 88% and
* had an active role in decision about your services: 92%

The results of these quarterly surveys are reviewed and analyzed by the Customer Satisfaction, Goals

and Priorities (CSGP) Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B). The Committee reviewed the results through March 31, 2010.

Five survey items were analyzed to compare the results for years ending 3/31/07, 3/31/08, 3/31/09, and 3/31/10. While there has been some fluctuation in results, no significant changes have taken place from year to year.

In addition, the members of the committee also read the verbatim comments to determine if trends or issues specific to SSB arise which may not be apparent from these categories. No significant trends were identified from this data, although the committee did note a recurring theme of dissatisfaction with the time it took to get a response back from SSB when a contact was made. However, a protocol has been instituted within WDU to address this issue.

1. **Current SSB/SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

## The CSGP Committee’s evaluation of progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities is included in the 2011 VR Effectiveness Report and is reported below:

1. **PRIORITY #1.3: Increase customer satisfaction with services provided**—By the end of FFY2011 the annual overall satisfaction with services provided by SSB will be at or above 85%. (Q1 on the Customer Satisfaction Survey, “What is your overall satisfaction with the services provided?”) Due to the fact responses to question 1 are on a scale from 1 to 10, this priority is measured by the percentage of respondents to rate their overall satisfaction above a level of 6 on the 1-10 scale. The scale is from 1 to 10 where “1” means “very dissatisfied” and “10” means “very satisfied”. A response equal to or greater than “6” fall in the “satisfied” range).

STATUS: For FFY 2011, the overall annual satisfaction with services provided was 80%. SSB did not meet this priority.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. Customer satisfaction surveys will be administered quarterly to approximately 70 SSB customers as part of the DEED customer satisfaction initiative. The surveys are conducted by an external organization.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

1. SSB and the SRC-B Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee will continue to review and analyze the data on a quarterly basis including specific customer comments.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

1. Based on the analysis of the Customer Satisfaction Survey results, the Customer Satisfaction Committee will provide recommendations for program improvements at their next scheduled meeting of the SRC-B to assure that services are available that meet customer needs.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

**PRIORITY #1.4:** Continue to insure every SSB customer has the information needed to make an informed choice in selecting a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) for adjustment to blindness training. During FFY2011, 100% of SSB customers attending ATB half time or more will indicate that they were given all the information they needed to make an informed choice about the CRP they wanted to attend.

The strategies for meeting this priority are—

1. During FFY2011, SSB counselors will complete the “Choosing ATB Training” form with each customer who is considering ATB training. Counselors will ensure that all customers are provided information, in an accessible format, about options for receiving adjustment to blindness services, and strongly encourage each customer to tour each community rehabilitation program. The “Choosing ATB Training” form is signed by the counselor and customer. The customer affirms that they received the information they needed to make an informed choice in the selection of the CRP. A copy of the form will be sent to SSB’s State Director, and the information will be compiled and reported semi-annually to the SRC-B.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

Priority 1.3 and 1.4 were retained for 2012.

**II. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Minorities and Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved**

1. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Minorities**

Historically, SSB has made every effort to address federal Standard 2.1, “the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds”.

Even though the 2010 ethnic profile of Minnesota was 85% White, its ethnic “fabric” is changing rapidly, requiring SSB and the SRC-B to continue evaluating and modifying its response to this changing landscape. Engagement with external stakeholders will assist SSB in disseminating information about the services it provides and help leverage expertise from these entities in increasing the cultural competence of staff.

Minnesota’s population of individuals classified as White increased by only 2.8% between 2000 and 2010 while Black, American Indian, Asian and Hispanic populations jettisoned by 59.8%, 10.8%, 50.9% and 74.5% respectively. The significant increase in the population of Blacks is due to an influx of individuals from several African countries which have been in the throes of famine and civil war.

Minnesota's Somali population is the largest in the United States after a Census Bureau report released in October 2011 estimated the number of people of Somali ancestry in the state to be more than 32,000. The United States Hmong population in 2009 was 226,522 and 54,524 resided in   
Minnesota. Populations of other minorities are Black (275,756), American Indian (58,333), Asian (212,120) and Hispanic (249,241).

The percentage of transition-aged minority youth classified as Blind or Visually Impaired by MDE’s unduplicated child count has been consistent since 2009, comprising approximately 30% of the total annual counts.

1. **Minority Services Committee Update**

The Minority Services Committee of the SRC-B and SSB have been active in this arena. As a result of robust discussions with the committee, SSB staff have begun outreach to organizations that provide services to minority communities. In January of 2012, a meeting was held with the New Americans Team from Rehabilitation Services (RS). This team provides a variety of support and services to people with disabilities from Somalia, Burma, Ethiopia, and other African nations. They identified some of the issues in serving these individuals such as: family barriers, religious constraints, cultural barriers, etc. They provided SSB with a number of strategies to start outreach activities such as: provide informational sessions in places where a large number of organizations come together for training, contact health clinics for minority populations, attend cultural events with information in the language of the country, etc.

In February of 2012, SSB staff met with the Hmong American Partnership (HAP) which has a large employment program. A collaborative relationship will be sought to reach out to the Hmong population in need of agency services to live independently and to find, maintain and retain employment.

One of the results pertaining to minorities from the five-year RSA quality in-service training grant for the period October 2006 – September 2011, was a Best Practices Manual on working with individuals from the five major minority cultures in Minnesota – American Indian, Hmong, Latino, Russian and Somali. This manual is posted on the SSB intraweb and accessible to SSB staff.

One final area of work has been with organizations providing translation services to SSB customers from other countries. As a result of meetings with a variety of organizations, SSB is encouraging counselors in the agency to:

* Have an initial planning meeting with the spoken language interpreter, the customer, and the community rehabilitation program (CRP) prior to beginning any Adjustment to Blindness (ATB) training. In this way everyone will know the goal of the training and ask any questions that anyone might have. Also it is a time for the counselor to define in advance any technical terms that may be used during the training.
* Discuss with Workforce Development (WFD) staff any issues they are having or have had with spoken language interpreters. These issues will be captured and sent to the respective agencies involved for clarification. A form has been developed for staff to complete if they have concerns at any time (not just during a WFD meeting), so the issues can be addressed as they arise.

1. **Case Service Expenditures and Service Provision Patterns**

Below are case service expenditures, listed by the total amount authorized, for FFY 2009, 2010 and 2011. The ordinal ranking of each service indicates service provision, defined as services provided to the most number of customers during that fiscal year.

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2009:

1. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $425,183.25

3. Maintenance – $246,562.90

4. Basic Academic, Remedial or Literacy Training - $173,328.35

5. Postsecondary Training – $124,524.21

2. Job Placement – $113,356.30

6. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$73,234.55

7. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $60,456.79

8. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $58,861.00

9. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $47,166.42

10. Transportation – $46,851.20

11. Vocational and Other Non-Medical Assessments - $31,194.61

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2010:

1. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $485,758.00

4. Maintenance – $164,858.05

3. Postsecondary Training – $122,173.50

12. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living - $108,144.14

8. Job Placement – $100,765.85

11. Basic Academic, Remedial or Literacy Training - $98.623.00

9. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$95,982.41

2. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $80,695.69

10. Vocational and Other Non-Medical Assessments - $74,980.21

6. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $60,899.75

7. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $44,795.78

5. Transportation – $10,097.71

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2011:

1. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $464,686.00

7. Assessment for Activities of Daily Living - $241,210.50

5. Job Placement – $228,019.93

2. Maintenance – $163,048.00

3. Postsecondary Training – $135,665.63

10. Vendor Payments for Internship/Job Trial - $114,965.99

8. Vocational and Other Non-medical Assessment – $94,019.48

9. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$83,523.82

11. Basic Academic, Remedial or Literacy Training - $82,690.00

12. On-the-Job Training - $65,923.00

6. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $18,886.09

4. Transportation – $14,327.27

1. **Findings**

The three year average expenditure for minorities was $7,383.01, 37% higher than for all customers and those with the most significant disabilities, yet 27% lower than for customers who are DeafBlind. Expenditures were made for 109, 106 and 104 minority customers during FFY2009, 210 and 2011 respectively, comprising just over 10% of all expenditures made.

Adjustment to blindness training, post-secondary training, maintenance and job placement have been among the most commonly utilized services during the past three years. A trend in expenditures consistent with customers who are DeafBlind, is the advent of internship/job trial and on-the-job training services for minorities in 2011. This is evidence that customers and counselors recognize these services as critical to job attainment.

The average cost of adjustment to blindness (ATB) training for persons from minority backgrounds was $23,076.67 over the past three fiscal years which accounted for 35% of total expenditures for ATB during this period. This is approximately four times higher than the cost for other populations.

In FFY’s 2009, 2010 and 2011, SSB served the following customers from minority populations: 219 (20.8% of total customers served), 226 (21.5%) and 215 (21.3%) respectively. These referrals represent a significant increase from 2005 when there were 133 minority customers served or 11% of all customers served. In 2008, minorities represented 23% of the total, a proportion slightly higher than those cited above since 2009. Considering the huge gains in minority populations in MN during the past decade, further attention in this arena is warranted. Successful employment outcomes achieved by minorities during these three fiscal years was 11, 10 and 11 respectively. These closures represented 13.4% of all successful outcomes during that period.

One of the objectives of SSB’s current RSA quality in-service training grant for FFY’s 2010 through 2015 is to develop competency in service delivery to English as a Second Language (ESL) adult customers. The Minority Services Committee update above illustrates SSB's outreach and collaborative efforts. There is continued work between the Committee, SSB staff and teachers and administrators of the Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. Currently, SSB in conjunction with the Minority Outreach Committee, is working on guidelines for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to people who are from other cultures and blind. When the guidelines are completed, they will be distributed to organizations providing ESL services and other community programs working with minority communities.

For most of us who have lived in the United States since birth, it is impossible for us to comprehend the experience of new Minnesotans as they learn our culture and strive to create a quality of life that many take for granted. One can only assume that superimposing a disability and consequent limitations upon this transition would make the task even more arduous. An understanding of the cultural implications of work, especially as they pertain to people with disabilities, men and women, the elderly; is critical if qualified rehabilitation personnel are to be successful in effecting these individuals’ vocational rehabilitation.

The federal standards and indicators for VR include a measure for the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds. A VR agency with fewer than 100 individuals from minority backgrounds exiting the VR program during the reporting period, is required to describe the policies it has adopted and steps implemented to ensure equal access by this population to VR services. As this section illustrates, SSB has demonstrated commitment to satisfy this requirement.

VR counselors continue to express an interest in enhancing their learning of new cultures to be as competent as possible in serving minorities. As referenced earlier, SSB will invite the VRS New Americans team and staff from the Hmong American Partnership to sit on a panel during the Workforce Development Unit’s quarterly meetings in FFY2012 to share their expertise.

SSB has interagency agreements with each of Minnesota’s 121 projects: White Earth and Red Lake. The purpose of each agreement is to “outline areas of mutual interest which will assist both organizations in accomplishing their missions by clarifying strategies, procedures and provisions for services to American Indians and others with visual impairments who live within the boundaries of the [Red Lake Nation] and [White Earth Reservation]”. At the present time, the Director of the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program is appointed to the General VR Agency’s Council, a member of the White Earth VR Program is appointed to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and the Red Lake Director is appointed to the SRC-B.

1. **Current SSB/SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

## The CSGP Committee’s evaluation of progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities is included in the 2011 VR Effectiveness Report and is reported below:

**GOAL #2: Increase number of individuals served.**

**PRIORITY #2.1: Minority Service Rate—** By the end of FFY2011, SSB will meet RSA Indicator 2.1, as follows: The ratio of customers from the minority population exiting after receiving services under an IPE to all customers from the minority population exiting will exceed 80% of the same ratio calculated for customers from the non-minority population. Current (FFY2011) performance level is 30.13%.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. Not later than 12/1/10, an on-line reference guide to understanding the culture of and working effectively with customers from the five major cultures represented in Minnesota will be available for all WDU staff. Staff orientation to this resource will be completed by 2/28/11

STATUS: The resource was made available in March 2011, and the staff orientation was completed.

1. In conjunction with the Minority Committee of the SRC-B, the SSB marketing and outreach coordinator will develop a list of relevant community based organizations to contact to obtain information on how best to outreach to that specific minority community. This list will be developed by December 1, 2010. The SSB marketing and outreach coordinator will meet with the targeted community based organizations not later than May 1, 2011 and provide a report of the results of these meetings to the Minority Committee of the SRC-B at their May 2011 meeting. By September 30, 2011, the SSB marketing and outreach coordinator, in conjunction with the Minority Committee of the SRC-B will develop a plan for implementing specific marketing and outreach activities based on the information learned from the initial contact with the community based organizations.

STATUS: The first two provisions of this strategy were met. The development of the marketing plan will be completed by 2012.

1. SSB will work with the most frequently used foreign language interpreter services to develop a venue for exchanging information with foreign language interpreters regarding the appropriate use of interpreters during meetings and during training activities. SSB will determine the most frequently used foreign language interpreter services by January 30, 2011. SSB will schedule the meetings not later than March 1, 2011 and complete them by July 1, 2011. Information from the meetings will be compiled and presented to WDU staff at their July 2011 staff meeting.

STATUS: All aspects of this strategy were completed except for the presentation at the July 2011 staff meeting due to a State shutdown. The presentation was made in October 2011.

1. In conjunction with the Minority Committee of the SRC-B, SSB will develop a plan for providing information to CRPs, vendors and Adult Basic Education programs on innovative approaches to effectively serving non-English speaking SSB customers by September 30, 2011.

STATUS: This strategy was not completed but will be done by September 2012.

1. Data on the employment outcomes of customers from minority backgrounds who participated in an internship, job trial or on-the-job training experience between June 2010 and June 2011 will be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of these employment strategies. Based on the results of the data analysis, relevant procedures will be developed by July 31, 2011 and implemented by August 31, 2011.

STATUS: This strategy was completed. A survey of counselors determined that although some were considered for these experiences, there were no individuals from minority backgrounds who participated in an internship, job trial or on-the-job training experience between June 2010 and June 2011.

**FFY2012 GOALS, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES**

**GOAL #2: In the targeted groups, increase the number of individuals served and the vocational outcomes achieved.**

**PRIORITY #2.1: Minority Service Rate—** By the end of FFY2011, SSB will meet RSA Indicator 2.1, as follows: The ratio of customers from the minority population exiting after receiving services under an IPE to all customers from the minority population exiting will exceed 80% of the same ratio calculated for customers from the non-minority population. Current (FFY2010) performance level is 52.6%.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. During FFY2012, at least one specific marketing and outreach activity will be implemented with each of the identified minority communities.
2. As a result of the information presented at the July 2011 WFD staff meeting, the need for additional training or information dissemination opportunities will be determined. The results of the analysis regarding the need for additional training will be reported to the WFD and ASU Directors not later than August 31, 2011. If additional training and/or information dissemination opportunities are required, these activities will begin no later than October 31, 2011.
3. In conjunction with the Minority Committee of the SRC-B, SSB will develop a plan for providing information to CRPs, vendors and Adult Basic Education programs on innovative approaches to effectively serving non-English speaking SSB customers by July 1, 2012.
4. Between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012, data will be maintained to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures implemented to improve internship, job trial or on-the-job training experiences of SSB customers from minority backgrounds. Not later than October 31, 2012, any changes to existing procedures will be completed and implemented.
5. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Underserved**

In 2002, the Minnesota Legislature required a study to identify the needs of individuals who are DeafBlind (DB). This study and previous needs assessment activities which had been conducted identified that this population was underserved by SSB’s vocational rehabilitation program. Multiple efforts have been taken to increase services to persons with a dual sensory loss:

1. formation of a SRC-B DeafBlind Committee

2. focused outreach to the deaf blind community

3. in-service training to increase staff competencies and knowledge related to DeafBlindness

4. developed a “best practices” guide for counselors

5. continue to administer needs assessments and customer satisfaction surveys to each and SSB

customer with a dual sensory loss

6. SRC- DeafBlind Committee analyzes the results

7. goals priorities and strategies have been developed to meet service gaps

8. developed and disseminated documents explaining VR services in American Sign Language and

simplified English, a specific task addressed by the DeafBlind committee

9. two counselors have been hired, one most recently in 2011 who is deaf and committed to serving the

deaf blind population

10. modified vocational assessment instruments and activities for use with DeafBlind customers

Persons from minority populations are also an underserved group of individuals as addressed in Section V of this document.

1. **Case Service Expenditure and Service Provision Patterns**

Below are case service expenditures, listed by the total amount authorized, for FFY 2009, 2010 and 2011. The ordinal ranking of each service indicates service provision, defined as services provided to the most number of customers during that fiscal year.

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2009:

3. Job Placement – $203,717.85

1. Maintenance – $113,635.66

2. Transportation – $85,701.09

5. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $75,682.73

8. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$40,459.31

6. Postsecondary Training – $35,499.83

7. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $32,576.55

9. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $20,789.13

4. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $14,667.25

11. Vendor Payment for Other Medical Restoration Services- $14,347.13

10. Interpreter/Driver/Reader for All Assessments - $5,042.75

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2010:

1. Transportation – $176,526.72

4. Job Placement – $150,880.25

6. Maintenance – $104,046.39

2. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $59,175.34

5. Postsecondary Training – $54,699.67

11. Job Coach - $39,026.00

7. Vocational and Other Non-Medical Assessments - $35,983.71

10. Occupational/Vocational Training - $32,666.29

3. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $23,191.63

8. Non-Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software – $21,065.78

9. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $14,779.26

Primary Services Provided\Expenditures in FFY 2011:

3. Job Placement – $222,528.55

1. Transportation – $150,898.93

2. Adjustment to Blindness Training – $100,710.56

12. On-the-Job Training - $65,480.80

5. Vocational and Other Non-medical Assessment – $54,305.20

6. Adaptive Computer Hardware/Software –$41,478.97

9. Job Coach - $31,676.10

13. Self-Employment Services - $19,058.67

11. Occupational/Vocational Training - $18,210.70

14. Vendor Payments for Other Medical Restoration Services - $14,794.26

7. Low Vision Aids and Appliances - $13,672.64

4. Reader/Driver/Notetaker/All Interpreters – $13,031.09

10. Maintenance – $11,506.11

8. Interpreter/Driver/Reader for All Assessments - $11,396.50

It is of interest to note that since 2009, job coaching, self-employment services and occupational/vocational training were services not previously utilized to a great extent for this population. Job coaching was authorized 28 times during the past two years. This is a notable trend which may portend increased employment outcomes. Job placement was the third to fifth most commonly authorized service during the past three years. Transportation and reader/driver/ notetaker/interpreter services ranked among the top four services authorized since 2009. The use of maintenance has dropped precipitously.

SSB provided services to 70 DeafBlind customers in FFY2011. These customers constituted 6.7% of all Workforce Development customers for whom services were authorized and accounted for 15% of all case services expenditures. This higher expenditure rate for this population is due, in part, to these individuals’ intensive communication needs.

Persons who are DeafBlind achieved 10, 8 and 6 successful employment outcomes in FFY2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively. Retail sales, customer service, social service, clinical psychology and computer repair were some of the occupations represented.

1. **DeafBlind Needs Assessment Survey**

During Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2006, State Services for the Blind (SSB) in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) and the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B developed a survey to obtain information on the needs and satisfaction of customers with a dual vision and hearing loss served by SSB. This survey is conducted every three years in part to comply with the RSA regulation for Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to conduct a customer needs assessment every three years. The questions were approved by the DeafBlind Committee and then reviewed by skilled ASL interpreters to ensure that the language was clear and easily translated into ASL. The survey was administered again in July and August 2010 to customers with a dual sensory loss served by SSB during FFY 2008, 2009 and part of 2010.

Forty-six customers who had a plan and had a primary or secondary disability of blindness or hearing loss could be surveyed. Each customer was contacted by his/her counselor to determine if they would like to take the survey, how they would want to have the survey questions administered, when they were available to take the survey and where they would like to have the survey administered. A schedule for administering the survey was established based on these contacts. Of the total number of customers available to participate in the survey, 36 customers agreed to take the survey.

The survey was administered in a variety of ways as chosen by the customer including:

* 1 customer was surveyed face-to-face using an interpreter and the interviewer at the SSB University Avenue location;
* 2 customers were surveyed face-to-face without need of an interpreter at the SSB University Avenue location;
* 15 customers responded to the survey via email;
* 17 customers were contacted by telephone with responses to the questions provided over the phone and recorded by an interviewer; and
* 1 customer was surveyed using a video phone connection with the interviewer and the video relay operator.

During the initial contact with each participant, information was provided as to how the results of the survey would be utilized. That information is listed below.

* Individual survey responses will be anonymous – only aggregate data will be shared with agencies/individuals.
* Results of the survey will be shared with the DeafBlind community and other individuals/agencies working to support DeafBlind people in Minnesota.
* If needs are identified that SSB cannot address, information will be shared with other agencies that can better address these needs.

1. **FINDINGS AND SURVEY RESULTS**

The following survey questions were asked of each participant:

1. What do you wish your counselor could do or do better? (You can list more than one response).
2. Are/were you satisfied with the services provided to you by SSB?

* YES NO
* If the answer is YES, why you were satisfied with services?
* If the answer is NO, why you were not satisfied with services?

1. What can SSB do to improve services for you?
2. Do you have any other comments, questions, concerns?

Listed below is the analysis and summary of customer responses to each question by category.

**Question # 1:** “What do you wish your counselor could do or do better? (You can list more than one response.)” Responses fell into 5 major categories listed below. The number of responses is in parentheses.

* **Positive comments about counselor** (21): counselor doing a good job, SSB has given me ample help and assistance, good counselor, I feel satisfied with what they have done
* **Counselor could have communicated better or communicated more timely** (15): respond to emails/calls faster, use email to take the communication barrier away, listen to what DeafBlind customer is saying, be more timely and organized
* **Counselor could do more about placement and job development** (8): more help finding a job, more in area of work at home, counselor could do a better job helping me whittle my interests down to a job, make sure have placement plan in place
* **Counselor could do more with assistive technology and other aids/devices** (4): offer different kinds of available technology, improve technology for assistive listening devices for larger meetings, finish things like ordering technology/hearing aids
* **Miscellaneous comments about what counselor could do better** (7): provide more assistance with everyday living options like cooking, provide alternative options instead of agreeing with everything I say, more flexibility in counselor roles, help finding volunteer job

**Question # 2:** “Are/were you satisfied with the services provided to you by SSB?” 28 respondents answered yes to this question and 8 responded no.

1. **Examples of responses from people who are satisfied**

* I appreciated how they looked at my individual situation and didn’t try to put me in a box.
* I was able to replace hearing aids with better hearing aids than I had before – really a big change for me.
* I have not required any services in the last 9 months – 1 year. Before that I was very satisfied with services.
* My counselor was there to help me – like got it right on it. My counselor got me in for eye exam. And hearing test right away.
* DB counselors have a better philosophy on rehabilitation of clients. I am real impressed with the way my case has been processed.
* My counselor really helped me. All was focused on vocational training. I am in my 7th year and training to become a psychologist. My counselor supported me all these years so I can get a good job.
* I like that SSB is being very aggressive in finding DB individuals that are out there. I am surprised at this.

1. **All of the responses from people who are not satisfied**

* I had to wait two months for my hearing aid to be processed and authorized. Prior to that I had to wait two weeks for preauthorization to see my audiologist.
* Did not get training that I had asked for.
* Also I think SSB relied on vendor too much and any negative comments I may have had about the vendor were largely ignored.
* Some services were very good. However if communication is considered as a service, then it was not good.
* I still don’t feel that I’m getting what I should be getting. I’m currently in a setback that could put my future on hold.
* There’s no VR counselor who fluent in ASL, not knowledge DeafBlind/Deaf cultures, do not know how to communicate with me – how to communicate with right English and need to talk direct/blunt.
* While SSB has truly come a long ways in the services traditionally, I felt that individually I didn’t receive the truly individualized services that I needed. SSB did not understand my problem of helping me narrow down my job search because my interests were way too vast, and I had never really held a job before. They told me I had to narrow my focus but did not help me at all in learning how to weed them down or asking me the right questions to do so.
* Does SSB provide funding for psychological help if someone is depressed?

**Question # 3:** “What can SSB do to improve services for you?” Responses fell into the five major categories listed below with the number of responses in parentheses. Again because respondents gave more than one response, the total number of responses is more than 36.

* **Positive or neutral comments** (11); so far fine, overall a good experience, are doing a fine job, keep doing what they are doing the way they are doing it, things are going great
* **SSB could improve on communication** (11): listen to customers is the bottom line, be more timely in answering my questions, more follow up
* **SSB can improve their placement and job development services** (7): more employer education in areas such as stereotypes, need for interpreters, ADA responsibilities; give DB people opportunities
* **SSB could improve their staffing** (6): hire more counselors, more counselors able to meet the needs of DB and have background working with DeafBlind people
* **Miscellaneous suggestions for improvement** (8): more willing to help people, more attention to updating technology for people in school and working, have list of people who are DeafBlind and successfully employed for new customers to talk to

**Question # 4:** “Do you have any other comments, questions, concerns?” Responses to this question fell into 2 major categories as seen below.

1. **Positive comments** (10):

* I am thankful for SSB and am really glad to be getting the services I do and do not have much for concerns.
* I am awed by technology. I used Dragon Naturally Speaking and ZoomText – these would not be available to me without SSB.
* I worked with two counselors and was very satisfied with how I was treated – with respect and understood what I was asking for and why.
* My counselors followed through on everything in a timely manner, and the training I got with (technology vendor) was very good – she would research things if there was something she didn’t know.
* I was pleased with (SSB technology specialist). He set up new computer and new software to go with it so I was satisfied with that aspect as well.
* SSB was helpful to me.
* My counselor was very helpful and very understanding. I am very thankful for the program and services.
* SSB has been very helpful to me in my life being blind. I am very thankful to them for that.
* My case worker has been very, very helpful to me.
* Some of the counselors have been very good lately.

1. **Additional comments and suggestions** (24):

* I feel that the counselors should have a lesser load per counselor. If needed more counselors should be hired.
* Requested equipment (ID Cane) and it hasn’t arrived yet – long time to wait.
* Maybe SSB could publish a newsletter that comes out monthly to inform people what is going on in general community or what SSB is doing. That keeps people informed without them having to make an appointment with a counselor.
* SSB is a critically needed service for person who is hearing and visually impaired like myself. Would like if counselor could really stay with it until gainfully employed and give you more flexibility with that. On a scale of 10, I would give the program an 8.
* Listen to people.
* Counselor needs to read reports – if client has done something previously, don’t go through it a second time because it wastes time and money.
* I wish to go back to “90s where SSB had great services.
* Why not hire DeafBlind staff work at SSB.
* My wishes is that SSB should have DeafBlind people to be on panel while staff have workshop – keep up every 2 years because of new staffs in workforce.
* Wish SSB staff take ASL training – more time communicate with DeafBlind people.
* I am very concerns that counselor doesn’t answer my question or get going that I want to reopen case.
* Counselor promise me will get things for me but she NEVER do.
* No one at SSB give me a support. I have been call Senate and my Representative how no good service I get from SSB which I need some support for my living.
* My question is: Is there similar service as SSB that I can get to or different case manager?

The number of comments on the survey that related to communication was viewed by the DeafBlind Committee and SSB as a critical area for improvement. Therefore the committee is working with SSB to develop a plan to assist staff in improving effective communication with DeafBlind customers.

**4. DEAFBLIND COMMITTEE UPDATES**

During FFY 2010, State Services for the Blind (SSB) in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) and the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B developed a survey to obtain information on the needs and satisfaction of customers with a dual vision and hearing loss served by SSB. The results of the survey have been shared with other community partners serving individuals who are DeafBlind. It is our hope that this information may provide other agencies with information regarding needs of this population which may fall within their parameters. The results may also point to areas where SSB and other agencies can collaborate to provide quality services to DeafBlind persons throughout Minnesota.

SSB is currently working with the SRC-B and the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B to develop strategies to address some of the issues identified in the survey. One area identified was to develop a “plan to improve communication with DeafBlind customers”. The plan objective is to “communicate effectively with DeafBlind Customers throughout Minnesota”. This plan was developed with input from SSB staff, the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B and the SRC-B.

Much has transpired in this regard:

* All new WDU staff continue to receive 1:1 training on the DB Procedures Manual.
* Most counselors are using the checklist in the DB Procedures Manual to document the preferred interpreters, preferred methods of signed communication, environmental accommodations and any other forms of communication used by a customer such as email, video phone, relay service, etc.
* WDU supervisors continue to send out information about any training coming up in the area of DB.  Thus far, 1 staff has attended AT training at Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), 2 staff have attended training at HKNC and a number of staff have attended the free training seminars provided yearly by DHS.  SSB keeps track of any of the trainings that staff attend if the staff person completes a training request form.
* In 2013, the DB Committee will again be doing the DB survey.  There will be questions on the survey about communication to determine if SSB is meeting the timeliness strategy.
* As the committee continues to work on revising SSB documents into simplified English, many VR words are identified and put into language understood better by DB customers.  Several of these words and concepts include:

1. Informed Choice:  need to define this concept.  DB Committee defined it as:  having the information needed to make good decisions about your rehabilitation plan.
2. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):  a written plan that includes all services SSB provides to a customer.
3. When describing services, it is best to include examples if the concept is unclear.  For example, under the options for how a customer develops his/her IPE, there is one phrase stating “with someone of your choosing”.  What does this mean – family, friends, teachers, etc.  Examples help to clarify concepts not easily understood.
4. Also, fewer words are better and bulleted lists are easier to read for DB customers.  For instance, if describing how to develop an IPE, instead of saying “On your own without any help from SSB or anyone else”, just say “On your own”.  This makes the message clear.

* In addition to the above information on identifying misunderstood words, an email has been sent out to WDU staff asking them to send in any words/concepts they have had difficulty explaining to their DB customers.  This may provide even more information to this part of the communication plan.
* We will update the committee at the March meeting.  They have received one update at the December meeting.

1. **Current SSB /SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

## Progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities:

**GOAL #2: Increase number of individuals served.**

**PRIORITY #2.2: DeafBlind Outreach and Service**—Enhance services for persons who have a dual sensory loss, including persons who are DeafBlind. During FFY2011 at least 3 individuals with a dual sensory loss will secure employment as a result of SSB services.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. Continue training opportunities for new staff on understanding DeafBlindness and competency in serving SSB customers who are DeafBlind.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

1. In conjunction with the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B, utilize the information from the FY2010 needs assessment to identify at least one service delivery need by December 31, 2010. In conjunction with the DeafBlind Committee, develop and implement an Action Plan to address this service delivery need by March 2011.

STATUS: Improved communication was identified as a service delivery need. As of the end of this fiscal year, the action plan was in the process of being developed.

1. To increase and improve communication between DeafBlind customers and SSB, the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B, in cooperation with SSB, will continue to review standard written communications at least once per year to determine their effectiveness with ASL users. Additional materials will be developed as determined by the DeafBlind Committee.

STATUS: This strategy was met and is ongoing. There will be a revision of "Customers and Informed Choice" document in FFY 2012.

1. Based on information from the FY2010 needs assessment, SSB will provide information to Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Department of Human Services about potential collaborative efforts not later than December 31, 2010. SSB will request information from these agencies by June 30, 2011 on their ability to work collaboratively with SSB on identified needs. For all agreed upon collaborative efforts, an action plan will be developed by SSB and the collaborating agency by September 30, 2011. SSB will update the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B at each of the milestones indicated above.

STATUS: SSB provided information to the relevant agencies as indicated in the strategy. The agencies did not express interest. One possible additional strategy for increasing SSB's collaboration with other agencies on this issue is to include members from The Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and from the Department of Education on the DeafBlind committee of the SRC-B.

**FFY2012 GOALS, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES**

**GOAL #2: In the targeted groups, increase the number of individuals served and the vocational outcomes achieved.**

**PRIORITY #2.2: Deafblind Outreach and Service**—Enhance services for persons who have a dual sensory loss, including persons who are DeafBlind. During FFY2012 at least 8 individuals with a dual sensory loss will secure employment as a result of SSB services.

\*NOTE: The number of individuals who will secure employment is left blank until July 2011 when a realistic number will be determined.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. All new WFD staff will receive one-on-one training on the DeafBlind Procedures Manual to include communication styles and communication issues as part of the orientation that occurs within the first three months of hire. All WFD staff will receive an annual review of the communication methods at their October staff meeting.
2. The Plan to increase effective communication between counselors and DeafBlind customers and the Plan to increase the number of DeafBlind competitively employed will continue as written until June 2013. In June 2013, the DeafBlind needs assessment will be administered. This needs assessment will contain questions specifically designed to determine the effectiveness of the Plan to increase effective communication and the plan to increase the number of competitive employments.
3. To increase and improve communication between DeafBlind customers and SSB, the DeafBlind Committee of the SRC-B, in cooperation with SSB, will continue to review standard written communications at least once per year to determine their effectiveness with ASL users. Additional materials will be developed as determined by the DeafBlind Committee.
4. Between October 1, 2011 and June 30, 2013, the collaborative efforts of SSB, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Department of Human Services to improve statewide services to DeafBlind individuals will be reported to the DeafBlind Committee by SSB’s representative on the Quad-Agency Team after the annual meeting of that group. As a result of the DeafBlind needs assessment administered in June 2013, strategies for additional collaborative efforts will be developed, incorporated in the Goals, Priorities and strategies for FFY2014 and communicated to the Quad-Agency Team.
5. **VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who are Unserved**

The SCR-B and SSB work in a systematic and ongoing manner to identify the needs of Minnesotans with disabilities who are unserved. This effort has led to the finding there are no unserved populations for VR services. However, a gap in service availability provided by our Senior Services Unit has been identified to elderly Minnesotans with low vision.

**III. The Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served through Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

SSB is a full partner in Minnesota's Workforce Center System comprised of 49 Workforce Centers (WFC) and 16 Workforce Service Areas (WSA). Because of SSB's small staff complement, counselors are located in 11 of the WFC’s statewide but travel to itinerant locations as needed. Even though limited accessibility of the Workforce Centers to the blind and visually impaired has been a chronic issue over the years, SSB counseling staff and customers benefit to some degree from the co-location with the DEED and WSA partners.

SSB surveyed the WSA Directors asking them whether their programs provided employment services to individuals who were blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind who were not customers of SSB during FFY2011. Eight of the 16 WSA Directors responded, with five indicating their program had not provided services to any customers who were visually impaired. Three Directors indicated their program had served 23 customers who were blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind during the past fiscal year. WSA 2, Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program, served the most customers in this category: 19 with 14 of those customers not working with SSB. However, there is ample evidence that referral relationships between WSA staff and SSB are well developed.

Findings

Unfortunately, WF1, the on-line case management system used by staff within DEED and the Workforce Centers, does not track customers concurrently served by SSB and other partners. Concurrent enrollment for individuals with visual impairments continues to be infrequent because of the specialized services required by these individuals and the long-standing practice to refer individuals with vision loss to SSB.

SSB continues to provide the Minnesota WFC system technical assistance and consultation with regards to programmatic accessibility, especially as it pertains to computer hardware and software in the Resource Areas of Minnesota’s Workforce Centers. This consultation is provided either by SSB staff in the field or by SSB's Chief Technology Officer who serves on the WFC Systems Resource Area Advisory Group. SSB staff play an important role in educating our WFC partners on the potential and service needs of individuals with visual impairments. SSB participates in local WFC planning groups at the executive management level within the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

**IV. The Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

SSB does not believe there is a need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRP) as defined in regulations at 34 CFR 361.5 (b)(17). SSB and its vendors understand there is a continuous need to improve services, to assure the highest level of customer satisfaction and to assure the highest level of skill proficiency among the vendors used.

For the past three fiscal years, adjustment of blindness training has been the largest expenditure: exceeding post-secondary training, the service ranked second in expenditures, by approximately 55% each year. In 2011, $1,203,938.12 was expended on this service which constituted approximately 25% of all expenditures.

SSB and the CRP’s must continue to work cooperatively together as the services the CRP's provide are most critical to the personal and vocational independence of blind Minnesotans.

1. **Adjustment to Blindness Vendor Satisfaction Questionnaire**

SSB and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind designed a customer survey to measure the satisfaction of Adjustment to Blindness training participants. The results of this questionnaire, when used by SSB’s customers, enhances their informed choice in selecting a provider. Below is the ABT Vendor Satisfaction Questionnaire.

1. First, did you complete your training with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(**[INSERT NAME OF TRAINER]**

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_No

**[IF NO]**  Could you tell me why you were not able to complete the training?

You have finished the survey. Thank you for participating!

**[IF YES]**

Next, I’m going to ask a series of questions about satisfaction, and I’ll ask you to answer using a 0 to 10 scale. ‘0’ means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘10’ means ‘completely satisfied’.

1. How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** understood your training needs and questions? ‘0’ means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘10’ means ‘completely satsfied’

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** showed patience with your individual needs? ‘0’ means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘10’ means ‘completely satisfied’

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** was knowledgeable about the subject?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** was prepared?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** was on time for the training?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. Overall, how satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[NAME OF TRAINER]** was a good teacher?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you with the **quality** of the training you received?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. How satisfied were you with what you learned from the training you received?

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

1. Now, using a scale of 0 to 10, how challenged were you to develop your skills in the alternative techniques of blindness? Here, ‘0’ means ‘not at all challenged’ and ‘10’ means ‘challenged beyond my abilities’.

Challenged Comfortable Not beyond my level challenged abilities at all

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

11.How satisfied were you that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**[INAME OF TRAINER]**challenged you to develop skills in the alternative techniques of blindness? ‘0’ means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘10’ means ‘completely satisfied’

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

12. How satisfied are you that as a result of this training, you met your personal goals? ‘0’ means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘10’ means ‘completely satisfied’

Completely Satisfied Neutral Completely Dissatisfied

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

13. Next, a yes/no question. Were you treated with respect during the training?

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**[Per the “Type of Training (Program)” listed in the heading, ask the pertinent following question(s) if ATB ask all questions.]**

Now, I will read a statement and I would like you to rate the statement using a scale of 0 to 10. But here, ‘0’ means ‘not able to do independently and ‘10’ means ‘able to do independently

(Cane Travel, O & M, ATB Training)

14. As a result of this training, I am able to travel safely around my community. ‘0’ means ‘not able to do independently and ‘10’ means ‘able to do independently’.

N/A Able to do Partially Not able Independent to do Independently

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

(Assistive Technology, Technology, ATB Training)

15. As a result of this training, I am able to use access, use and maintain a computer or personal notetaker. ‘0’ means ‘not able to do independently and ‘10’ means ‘able to do independently’.

N/A Able to do Partially Not able Independent to do Independently

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

(Rehabilitation Teaching, ATB Training)

1. As a result of this training, I am able to take care of my personal needs like grooming, cooking, laundry, etc. ‘0’ means ‘not able to do independently and ‘10’ means ‘able to do independently’.

N/A Able to do Partially Not able Independent to do Independently

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

(Braille, ATB Training)

1. As a result of this training, I am able to read and write Braille. ‘0’ means ‘not able to do independently and ‘10’ means ‘able to do independently’.

N/A Able to do Partially Not able Independent to do Independently

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

**[REST OF QUESTIONS ASKED OF EVERYONE]**

18.For the next question, we’ll also use a scale of 0 to 10, but here ‘0’ means ‘no self confidence’ and ‘10’ means complete self-confidence’. As a result of this alternative technique training, I have the same self-confidence as my sighted peers in doing everyday activities:

Complete Some No selfconfidence Self-confidence Self-confidence

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

19. Finally, would you recommend this training to others?

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**[IF YES]** What about your experience would prompt you to make a recommendation?

**[IF NO/UNSURE]** What would make you reluctant to make a recommendation?

20. Before we finish, are there any additional comments you’d like to make about the training you’ve received, or about this survey itself?

You have finished the survey. Thank you for participating!

1. **Findings**

The FFY 2011 survey results for the Workforce Development Unit are:

Results at a glance:

**Travel safely around my community.**

Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind – 9.6  
Vision Loss Resources – 9.0

BLIND, Inc. – 8.7

Access, use, and maintain a computer or personal note taker.

The Speech Gurus – 9.5

Flint Million – 9.2  
Earle Harrison – 8.8

Thomas Lijewski – 8.5

Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind – 8.3

Deb Bock – 8.0

Vision Loss Resources – 7.7

BLIND, Inc. – 6.7

**Take care of my personal needs like grooming, cooking, laundry, etc.**  
Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind – 10.0

BLIND, Inc. – 9.4

Vision Loss Resources – 7.7

**Read and write Braille.**Vision Loss Resources – 5.7

BLIND, Inc. – 4.6

Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind – 4.3

**Build self-confidence (in combination with the specific skill areas above).**The Speech Gurus – 8.5

Deb Bock – 8.2

BLIND, Inc. – 8.0

Flint Million – 7.8

Vision Loss Resources – 7.5

Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind - 7.0

Earle Harrison – 7.0

Thomas Lijewski -7.0

1. **Current SSB /SRC-B Goals and Strategies**

**Progress on FFY11 Goals and Priorities:**

**GOAL #1: Improve number and percent of closed cases achieving employment after receiving services.**

**PRIORITY #1.4:** Continue to insure every SSB customer has the information needed to make an informed choice in selecting a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) for adjustment to blindness training. During FFY2011, 100% of SSB customers attending ATB half time or more will indicate that they were given all the information they needed to make an informed choice about the CRP they wanted to attend.

**The strategies for meeting this priority are—**

1. During FFY2011, SSB counselors will complete the “Choosing ATB Training” form with each customer who is considering ATB training. Counselors will ensure that all customers are provided information, in an accessible format, about options for receiving adjustment to blindness services, and strongly encourage each customer to tour each community rehabilitation program. The “Choosing ATB Training” form is signed by the counselor and customer. The customer affirms that they received the information they needed to make an informed choice in the selection of the CRP. A copy of the form will be sent to SSB’s State Director, and the information will be compiled and reported semi-annually to the SRC-B.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met

1. SSB and the Vendor Outcomes and Measures Committee of the SRC-B developed and implemented a customer satisfaction survey for all customers who complete adjustment to blindness training. During FFY2011, each SSB customer will be surveyed six months after completion of adjustment to blindness training or at time of case file closure, whichever comes first. Each month an estimated ten to fifteen customers will be contacted to complete the telephone survey of eighteen questions.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

1. The data gathered from the completed customer satisfaction surveys will be formatted, posted externally on the SSB website, and made available in an accessible format for customer review when selecting a service provider to meet their rehabilitation needs. ATB providers will be able to use the results for continuous improvement of their services. The results will be reported to the SRC-B and will be used to identify customer needs and areas for service improvements.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

1. To insure quality services, SSB will continue to require individual vendors who provide training to SSB customers on access and assistive technology to pass a test on software they wish to teach and to successfully complete an adult learning course prior to becoming an approved vendor.

STATUS: This strategy continues to be met.

**FFY2012 Goals, Priorities and Strategies**

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4. To insure quality services, SSB will continue to require individual vendors who provide training to SSB customers on access and assistive technology to pass a test on software they wish to teach and to successfully complete an adult learning course prior to becoming an approved vendor.

**V. Summary of Findings**

The Needs Assessment Process Framework developed by the SRC-B's Needs Assessment Task Force in 2006 provided the foundation for completing SSB's 2012 triennial comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind. Multiple inputs to this assessment have been conducted by the SRC-B and SSB over the past three years while developing and implementing the Goals, Priorities and Strategies.

Multiple and varied outreach and marketing activities have occurred during this period to transition students, their parents and potential stakeholders in the Senior Services Unit, Communication Center and Workforce Development Unit.

A review of closed cases by SSB management revealed that the practice of using an interrupted status in managing vocational rehabilitation case files had not been used for several fiscal years in an effort to manage caseload size after there had been no activity with the customer for a time. Use of this interrupted status was reinstituted in approximately 2008 to accurately reflect the fact that some customers were temporarily unable to proceed towards the accomplishment of their rehabilitation goals for disability related reasons. Since that time, the number of unsuccessful closures has decreased and SSB's rehabilitation rate has increased.

An estimation of the incidence of blindness in Minnesota by using multiple sources revealed that approximately 1% of the population is blind. The importance of efforts by the SRC-B and SSB to anticipate the significant growth in this population and its unique needs, due to the growth in minority populations, is confirmed. The National Eye Institute projects the number of blind persons in the United States to increase by 58% to 1.6 million in year 2020. This highlights the importance of developing and instituting innovative service delivery practices. Likewise, increases between 2000 and 2010 of Blacks, American Indians, Asians and the Hispanic population increased by 59.8%, 10.8%, 50.9% and 74.5% respectively. In addition, Minnesota's Hmong population in 2009 was 54,524, slightly less than Minnesota's American Indian population of 58,333.

The results of the Minnesota State Survey suggests that nearly a quarter million Minnesotans are unable to read regular size print even when they are wearing corrective lenses. Again, trends such as these must be anticipated considering the incidence of visual impairment among seniors and the substantial increase in this population.

The number of Minnesota served by SSB's Workforce Development Unit has remained remarkably consistent over the past four years illustrated by the fact that in 2008, 1015 customers were served and in 2011, 1017.

Highlights for the Workforce Development Unit included:

* the number of successful employment outcomes has remained consistent: 78, 80 and 81 in FFY’s 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively.
* the number of unpaid homemaker closures continues at a low rate of approximately 5 per year since 2008.
* unsuccessful closures after plan has decreased markedly from 105 in FFY2008 to 36 in FFY2011.
* unsuccessful closures before plan has remained consistent since FFY2008 with 70, 80, 64 and 69 through FFY2011.
* the difference in weekly salary from application has again been consistent since FFY2008 with fluctuations of no more than 3.6%, to a rate of $348.94 in FFY2011.
* the average weekly wage at closure for full-time work increased significantly from FFY2009 to 2010 from $16.85 to $19.86, a 15.2% increase.
* the average weekly wage at closure for part-time work also increased significantly from $13.85 to $15.04, an 8% increase.

It is of interest to note the significant difference in service provision between all customers of the WDU and customers from minority backgrounds. From 2009 to 2010, the provision of post-secondary training ranked second for all customers. However, in 2011, there was a marked change in the provision of post-secondary training, as it ranked second and third for all customers and minority customers respectively.

The three year average expenditure for minorities was $7,383.01, 37% higher than for all customers and those with the most significant disabilities, yet 27% lower than for customers who are DeafBlind. Expenditures were made for 109, 106 and 104 minority customers during FFY2009, 210 and 2011 respectively, comprising just over 10% of all expenditures made.

Adjustment to blindness training, post-secondary training, maintenance and job placement have been among the most commonly utilized services during the past three years. A trend in expenditures consistent with customers who are DeafBlind, is the advent of internship/job trial and on-the-job training services for minorities in 2011. This is evidence that customers and counselors recognize these services as critical to job attainment.

Since 2009, job coaching, self-employment services and occupational/vocational training were services not previously utilized to a great extent for the DeafBlind. Job coaching was authorized 28 times during the past two years. This is a notable trend which may portend increased employment outcomes. Job placement was the third to fifth most commonly authorized service during the past three years. Transportation and reader/driver/notetaker/interpreter services ranked among the top four services authorized since 2009. The use of maintenance has dropped precipitously.

SSB provided services to 70 DeafBlind customers in FFY2011. These customers constituted 6.7% of all Workforce Development customers for whom services were authorized and accounted for 15% of all case services expenditures. This higher expenditure rate for this population is due, in part, to these individuals’ intensive communication needs.

A review of expenditure data for persons with significant disabilities reveals that maintenance, transportation, adjustment to blindness training and postsecondary training were the four most commonly utilized services. Reader/driver/notetaker/interpreters was listed as an expenditure in FFY 2009 and 2010 but interestingly, not in 2011. In 2011, vendor payment for internship/job trial was ranked 12th but did not appear in previous years: perhaps a promising development because of the high correlation between these types of experiences and attainment of employment.

Over the past three fiscal years, an average of 20.93% of SSB's customers met SSB's criteria as an individual with the most significant disability and accounted for 23.21% of expenditures.

Adjustment to blindness training is critical to this population to increase their personal and vocational independence. Over the past three fiscal years, 24.49% of customers with the most significant disabilities received adjustment to blindness training as compared to 21.77% of all workforce development customers.

Average expenditures per customer for all those served within Workforce Development was $4,929.96 over FFY2009, 2010 and 2011 as average expenditures per customer for those with the most significant disabilities during that same time period was $10,109.38.

The results of the first three questions of the Minnesota WFC Customer Satisfaction Survey have been consistent: 7.78, 7.36 and 7.37 respectively from April of 2009 to March of 2010 and 7.73, 7.44 and 7.40 from October 2010 to September 2011. The Customer Satisfaction, Goals and Priorities (CSGP) Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) analyzed five survey items to compare the results for years ending 3/31/07, 3/31/08, 3/31/09, and 3/31/10. While there has been some fluctuation in results, no significant changes have taken place from year to year.

Members of the committee also read the verbatim comments to determine if trends or issues specific to SSB arise which may not be apparent from these categories. No significant trends were identified from this data, although the committee did note a recurring theme of dissatisfaction with the time it took to get a response back from SSB when a contact was made.

In response to SSB's need to increase and strengthen services provided to persons with dual sensory loss, SSB and the SRC-B have made multiple efforts:

1. formation of a SRC-B DeafBlind Committee

2. focused outreach to the deaf blind community

3. in-service training to increase staff competencies and knowledge related to DeafBlindness

4. developed a “best practices” guide for counselors

5. continue to administer needs assessments and customer satisfaction surveys to each and SSB

customer with a dual sensory loss

6. SRC- DeafBlind Committee analyzes the results

7. goals priorities and strategies have been developed to meet service gaps

8. developed and disseminated documents explaining VR services in American Sign Language and

simplified English, a specific task addressed by the DeafBlind committee

9. two counselors have been hired, one most recently in 2011 who is deaf and committed to serving the

deaf blind population

10. modified vocational assessment instruments and activities for use with DeafBlind customers

SSB continues to enjoy a positive working relationship with the community rehabilitation programs for the blind in Minnesota. This rapport allows dialogue to occur regarding the continuous improvement of quality services provided relative to adjustment to blindness training. SSB looks forwarding to working with the CRP’s and personal service operators in FFY2012 to solicit input on the new master contract, monitoring protocol and rate-setting methodology which will be implemented this year.

At the February 23, 2012 meeting of the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council--Blind testimony was heard regarding a possible shortage of rehabilitation teachers particularly in greater Minnesota. Lacking data on this subject, the Needs Assessment Task Force recommends that further study is warranted to determine if this constitutes a gap in service.

The goals, priorities and strategies (included in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and 4.11(d) of SSB’s 2012 State Plan) developed by SSB and the SRC-B will continue to provide the framework for improving and expanding services to SSB customers. Evaluation of SSB’s progress in achieving these in FFY2011 are reported in Attachment 4.11(e)(2).