

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Performance Report

Performance Results for State Fiscal Year 2011

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Introduction

This report will present the accomplishments of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, a division of the Iowa Department of Education, for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2011. Accomplishments include those related to core functions identified in the IVRS SFY 2011 performance plan as well as progress toward goals in the IVRS Strategic Plan (developed in FY 08 for subsequent three year period). Information in this report is provided in accordance with the Accountable Government Act to improve decision-making and increase accountability to Iowa stakeholders and citizens.

Key services of the agency are essentially separated into **two major program areas:** 1. Services that assist Iowans with disabilities to become employed in the competitive labor market or to live independently in their homes through provision of various supports. 2. Services involving the evaluation of Iowa citizens' disabilities to determine eligibility for economic support via Social Security disability benefits.

IVRS has managed a waiting list of potentially eligible clients seeking vocational rehabilitation services since May, 2002 and for several years thereafter has had to balance the need for VR services against inadequacy of funding to meet all needs identified. IVRS was not able to match all available federal funding for VR services, which impacted IVRS' ability to meet a key federal standard. This has resulted in having to manage a waiting list with approximately 3500 individuals on the list through the past year. Individuals with significant disabilities are waiting approximately eleven months prior to being able to receive vocational rehabilitation services. Individuals with the most significant disabilities are receiving services in approximately thirty days while all other individuals have been on the waiting list since September 2009.

The Disability Determination Services bureau has met and exceeded the requirements set out by the Social Security Administration for accuracy and timeliness associated with determinations on disability claims.

This report will provide a brief update on progress toward the IVRS strategic plan goals as well as information on performance of the three identified core functions of the agency:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living
- Economic Supports
- Agency Resource Management.

Information for the two major program areas named above will be presented using the "**Key Results Template**". These continue to be the most crucial indicators of this agency's success in providing services to its customers.

Agency Overview

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) exists to serve individuals with disabilities under Title II and Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act and Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act. IVRS serves people with disabilities by: 1) providing vocationally related assistance to achieve economic independence; or 2) providing disability determinations that result in appropriate financial benefits per Social Security Administration guidelines. Other services and financial assistance are provided to enable persons with disabilities to maintain independent

functioning as long as possible within their communities and to prevent institutionalization. IVRS is an integral part of the statewide disability community.

The current statements of mission and vision are included below. The Strategic Objectives are identified in the “Results” section of this report.

MISSION

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

CORE FUNCTIONS

Assist eligible Iowans with disabilities in obtaining, maintaining and advancing in employment through rehabilitation services individually designed to disability and employment needs. Provide specialized services to the business community to meet their workforce and workplace needs.

Determine eligibility of Iowans who apply for disability benefits administered by the federal Social Security Administration

VISION

To be a respected leader that delivers innovative services to better the lives of Iowans with disabilities.

Background:

IVRS is the largest division of the Department of Education and functions with considerable autonomy. The division employs almost 400 people in 43 locations throughout the state. Employees work within three Bureaus and a Planning and Development Team. For vocational rehabilitation services, IVRS received \$20.9 million in federal funds and another \$5.6 million in non-federal funds; for disability determination services, IVRS received federal funds totaling approximately \$23.9 million from the Social Security Administration (no state funds).

The majority of staff is professionally trained rehabilitation counselors and disability examiners. Almost 90% of the counselors have master's degrees in counseling or a closely related field. IVRS is mandated by its federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to have qualified rehabilitation counselors – i.e., possession of an appropriate graduate degree. All disability examiners have at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. In addition, DDSB has on its payroll 34 professional consultants who are licensed as physicians, clinical psychologists, or speech pathologists. Most IVRS employees are covered under collective bargaining agreements negotiated with Iowa United Professionals and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

All employees of the Planning and Development Team, Administrative Services and Disability Determination Services bureaus work in the Des Moines area. With the exception of a few administrative personnel and the Polk County area office, most of the Rehabilitation Services Bureau employees are geographically disbursed outside of Des Moines to cover all 99 counties and every high school in the state. As stewards of the public trust, IVRS maintains an efficient workforce by assigning staff to multiple locations so that every community college, regent's institution, county, high school and most mental health institutes have access to an IVRS staff person.

Efforts have continued in collaboration with our partner agencies to improve work effectiveness. This occurs through communication and avoiding duplication of services through co-locating or itinerant offices in the Iowa Workforce Development Centers, community colleges, regent's institutions and through coverage at our mental health institutions.

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) has the primary responsibility for the statewide program of quality vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible disabled Iowans through direct and purchased services from a network of providers. The Disability Determination Services Bureau (DDSB) is responsible for determining the eligibility of Iowa residents, who apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (Title II), and Supplemental Security Income (Title XVI) or the Department of Human Services Medicaid waiver programs. DDSB makes the initial determination of eligibility and any subsequent determination of continuing eligibility and handles first-level appeals of unfavorable decisions. The Administrative Services Bureau (ASB) provides fiscal, personnel, information services and administrative support to the other Bureaus.

The Planning and Development Team (PDT) is responsible for planning, budgeting, program evaluation, and outreach -- including development of business contacts to foster client employment. Much of its previous responsibility for staff development has been absorbed by other staff after the retirement of a long-time staffer who maintained that function. There has been a deliberate attempt to increase visibility with business and industry and to integrate these services into developing a placement culture for the Rehabilitation Services Bureau Staff. This has included the opportunity to partner with the National Employment Network providing opportunities to better link job candidates with national employment opportunities as well as to market the value of Iowa businesses to a national audience. (See Business Outreach below for more detailed description)

IVRS customers are individuals with disabilities who need vocational or other assistance to help meet their goals for vocational or personal independence or who need financial benefits due to their disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation and disability determination programs are eligibility rather than entitlement programs. Applicants must meet federally determined criteria. Customers of both RSB and DDSB may apply on multiple occasions during their lifetime. Customers of the vocational rehabilitation program, be they Iowans with disabilities or the business community expect and receive professional and accurate career planning information and involvement to achieve workforce planning, placement or personal independence. DDSB claimants require accurate and timely decisions on their claims.

Competitive success is determined at the federal level by performance standards and indicators. In DDS that translates to timeliness and accuracy of case processing; on the vocational rehabilitation side, success relates to employment outcomes and equal access to services.

Strategic Challenges

IVRS was not able to match \$5.17 million of available federal funds for 2011. The lack of funds resulted in 3817 applicants for vocational rehabilitation services being placed on waiting lists.

IVRS is federally and state funded and, so, the multiplying effect of losing one state dollar due to budget cuts adversely impacts the delivery of rehabilitation services. Caseload size for counselors is increasing, which will require more purchase of services and ultimately diminish efficiencies. This also leads to more individuals placed on the waiting list because of the budget impact, and the lack of staff capacity to serve the number of individuals requesting services. Services of several temporary staff were secured for several months through ARRA funding, and when this ended, the same funding was applied to salaries and benefits of Rehabilitation Services Bureau staff who work directly with IVRS consumers.

IVRS reduced the amount of tuition and fees it pays for students who attend college after studying the impact of tuition rates on the IVRS budget. Such a reduction comes at a time when colleges are raising their tuition rates. While it is to the State of Iowa's advantage that these individuals pursue a college degree (the majority of clientele remain in the state after graduation), it does pose a burden on students who already have significant needs not experienced by the non-disabled population. It is too early to tell if the triangular effect of reduced tuition support from IVRS, increased cost of college programs, and decrease in disability support services will impact graduation and employment rates. IVRS's need to reduce the dollar amount for post-secondary funding does have an adverse impact on our clients as many already have other disability related costs they are managing. This, however, continues to be a priority area as education provides necessary academic and vocational skills to help our clients compete in the labor market. 96% of our graduating students remain in the state of Iowa and 70% of our successful employment outcomes have some type of post-secondary education. There is also a close partnership with our secondary schools as we work with our youth in transition. Approximately 33% of our referrals are from our secondary schools.

IVRS has historically found that purchasing, rather than delivering services directly, is taxing on the budget. IVRS expects to see these expenditures rise as there are insufficient staff to deliver the services.

IVRS continues to enhance technology (web-based software) to provide staff with a more efficient system to manage their work. This, coupled with the organization re-design, will positively impact productivity. Also, IVRS management is starting to use other technology (e.g., to conduct meetings remotely) as a way to reduce travel/costs throughout the state.

IVRS has also attempted to collaborate with our community rehabilitation programs and county waiver programs in an effort to provide supported employment services in network with other comparable benefits and services. This is relatively a small portion of our customers, representing approximately 2%.

Funds for Independent Living case services continue to decrease. As a result there is a growing waiting list approaching two years for the program. Extensive contract monitoring procedures have been necessary in the past year to ensure that contracting requirements are satisfied; IVRS continues to work with State Auditor's office and Office of Attorney General to ensure compliance, particularly after audits revealed significant issues with two of the Centers for Independent Living.

While there are no direct competitors for Disability Determination Services, there is competition for funding with other Social Security Administration entities and other states.

Business Outreach

The IVRS Business Network: During fiscal year '11 IVRS continued to infuse business outreach activities into local and state plans resulting in strengthened business relationships statewide.

These relationships enhance the counselors' understanding of business expectations and are directly connected to the planning process with consumers. It has been found by increasing employer involvement throughout the rehabilitation process, consumers will have better information to make informed choice decisions on their career plans. An additional result is a broader range of employment opportunities available.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to serving business and industry as a valued customer and in FY'11 demonstrated this commitment through the following activities:

- The IVRS strategic plan highlights the importance of understanding the changing workforce needs of Iowa business and industry and dedicates resources for developing IVRS' capacity to respond to those needs.
- Rehabilitation Services management participate on each Regional Workforce Investment Board in the State of Iowa.
- Partnerships with federal hiring authorities interested in utilizing the "Schedule A" appointments have increased IVRS job placements with federal agencies.
- Development of internships and on-the-job training opportunities has resulted in successful placements in various industries across the state.
- IVRS is coordinating the activities of the Employer Disability Resource Network (EDRN), www.EDRNetwork.org. With the support of the EDRN partners private and public rehabilitation professionals are collaboratively mobilizing resources, supports and services that add value to Iowa businesses hiring persons with disabilities.
- IVRS continues to be an active participant in the national and regional network (The NET) of 80 public VR agencies across the country. The NET membership allows for participation in online trainings, sharing of multi-state job leads and keeping up-to-date on federal employment opportunities.

Results

Strategic Plan:

The IVRS strategic plan was revised in September, 2007 and projected five major objectives to attain in the subsequent three (3) years; the objectives are listed below.

Strategic Objective 1: Develop and foster an engaging work environment that promotes innovation and continual improvement to achieve organizational priorities.

Strategic Objective 2: Develop a work force that identifies and responds to changing work force and work place needs.

Strategic Objective 3: Develop and deliver customer service that addresses customer needs and requirements.

Strategic Objective 4: Increase efficiency and customer value through performance accountability and continuous improvement.

Strategic Objective 5: Build external relationships that contribute to improved services that better the lives of Iowans with disabilities.

Progress toward Strategic Plan objectives:

With the departure of the former IVRS administrator in October, 2010, and a subsequent 7 month period without a permanent appointment, the IVRS Strategic Plan objectives were extended through the remainder of FY 11. Revisions to the Strategic Plan began in the last months of FY 11 when the new administrator was selected. With the extension of the former objectives, this report will focus on those objectives established years earlier.

Several staff continue to be involved in implementing actions intended to accomplish same objectives. Bureau Chiefs have continued regular meetings with the new Administrator regarding the strategic plan and are accountable for supporting staff and activities within each one's bureau that contribute to accomplishment of the objectives.

Performance Plan Results

See enclosed templates for **Key Results** and **Agency Performance Plan Results**.

Resource Reallocations

Resource reallocations in IVRS relate primarily to human resources as management continues to review and adopt the most effective staffing in relation to rehabilitation service delivery. The agency operates at a level that meets the current State standard for span of control – approximately 1:15 ratio of supervisor to employees. Instead of automatically filling vacant Rehabilitation Counselor jobs in the Rehabilitation Services Bureau, staffing patterns have been adopted which provide alternatives to more traditional staffing without diminishing the professional level of service required for IVRS clients.

We have continued to combine management positions wherever feasible. When geographic and other conditions have permitted, we combined area offices under one supervisor rather than maintain a supervisor for each major location. This occurred in FY 10 -- and again in FY 11 but with a management position that was not filled after the incumbent was promoted to IVRS Administrator. This will continue to be the structure in place for the foreseeable future.

The DDS bureau chief vacancy was filled by a current staff member in October, 2010. Prior to October, 2010, DDS was able to add some positions funded entirely by Social Security Administration to address the increasing disability claims workload that has become prevalent throughout the country. Since October, 2010, however, there has been a federal hiring freeze initiated by the Social Security Administration which means that DDS is unable to add FTEs; any vacant positions have been left unfilled.

KEY RESULTS 1 of 2

CORE FUNCTION

Name: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living

Description: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) provides a wide variety of services for persons with disabilities that lead to the attainment of their employment, independence and economic goals. Business and industry is also a customer of IVRS to whom various services are provided to help them meet their workplace and workforce needs. The desired outcome is fulltime or part time competitive employment in the integrated labor market. Services include: assessment, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental impairments, training, personal assistance services, placement, rehabilitation technology services, maintenance, transportation, small business enterprise assistance, and post-employment services.

Why we are doing this: IVRS provides services to help persons with disabilities find and maintain employment, or to help them live independently (not in a group home or other care facility). This greatly enhances their quality of life and adds to the Iowa economy through reduced dependence on public support and through the payment of taxes.

What we're doing to achieve results: The Rehabilitation Act and regulations require that IVRS hires master's degreed staff as counselors; those who may not have such degree must complete it within five (5) years. IVRS staff includes master's degreed rehabilitation counselors who are strategically located throughout the state. IVRS partners with nearly 100 organizations to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services. The Iowa Rehabilitation Services System (IRSS) has been developed and implemented to enhance internal operating efficiency. IVRS has met or exceeded both the quantity and quality performance measures, going back several years when there was insufficient non-federal funding.

IVRS has a federal mandate to serve the most significantly disabled individuals first when resources are limited. The focus upon vocational placement and the action planning done in each area office contributed to the number of individuals placed into competitive employment. Through the expertise of the counseling staff, collaboration with clients and other services and resources, IVRS has been increasing the number of clients placed in competitive employment. Every employed client becomes a tax payer and a consumer thereby increasing Iowa's economy and tax base while also saving the State's support dollars.

Data Sources: Case Service Records.

Resources Used: Combination of 78.7% federal funds with 21.3% non-federal funds required to generate the federal funding. State appropriation for FY 11 was \$4.7+ million. Total of 226 FTEs involved (out of budgeted 255.0).

Results

Performance Measure:

Number of Employment Outcomes

Performance Target:

2100

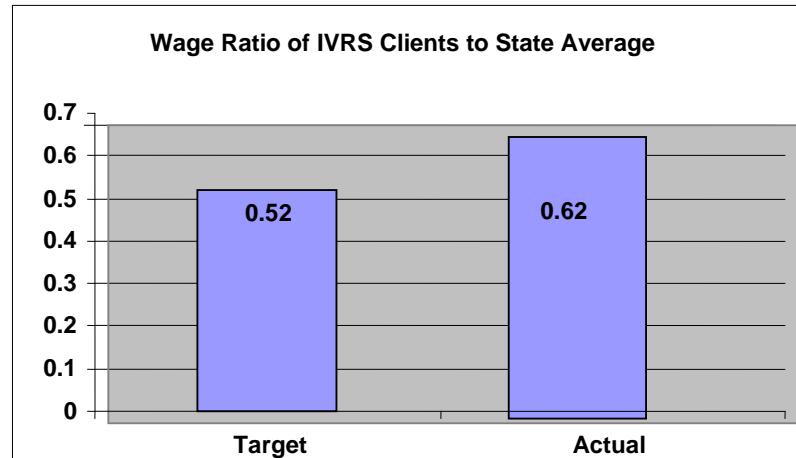
What was achieved: IVRS exceeded target by placing **2136** clients into competitive employment.

Performance Measure:

Wage ratio of IVRS clients to state average

Performance Target:

0.52



What was achieved: IVRS exceeded target by placing clients in positions paying an hourly rate of 62% of the average state hourly wage rate.

During FY 11 the average hourly earnings for a person with a disability placed into competitive employment by IVRS was \$11.57.

KEY RESULTS 2

CORE FUNCTION

Name: Economic Supports

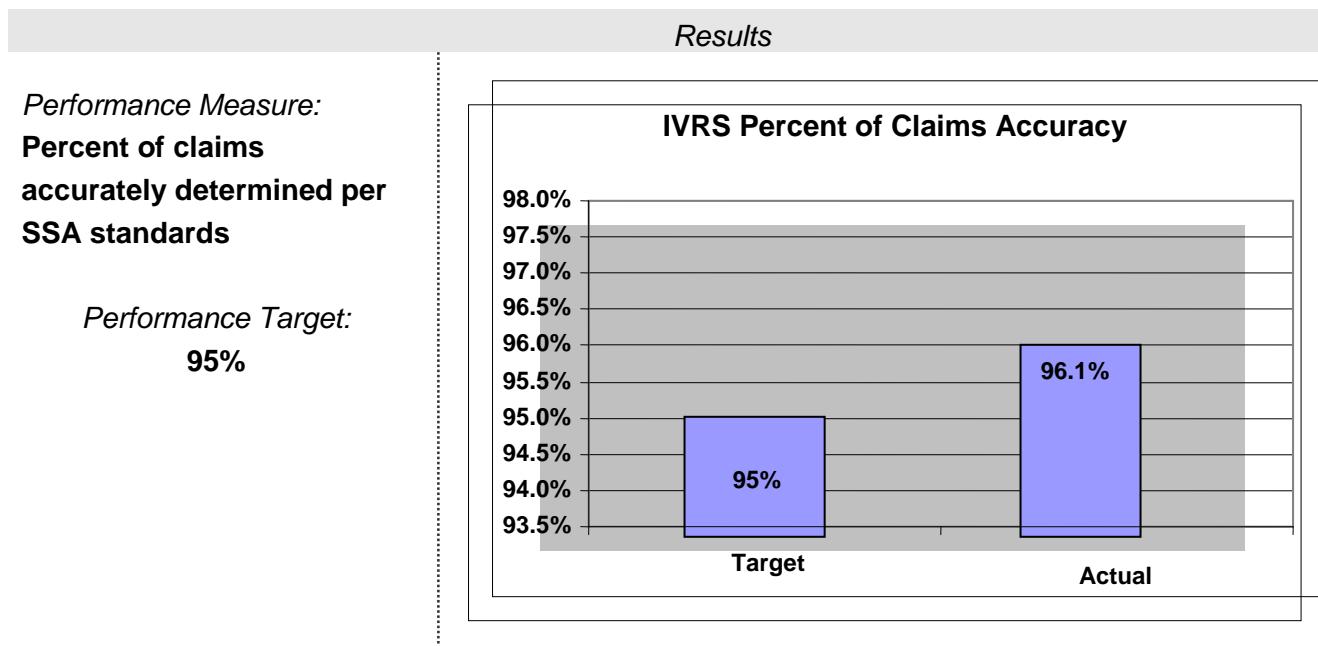
Description: The IVRS provides disability determination services to claimants for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income in Iowa through a relationship with the Social Security Administration (SSA) – per federal regulations.

Why we are doing this: To enhance economic independence for disabled Iowans through cash benefits and healthier Iowans through access to Medicare and Medicaid.

What we're doing to achieve results: The IVRS has successfully implemented a paperless process to determine claimant eligibility for social security benefits and the new system is operating effectively.

Data Sources: Social Security Administration Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment

Resources Used: 100% federal funding of approximately \$23.9 million from the Social Security Administration. Total of 143.7 FTEs involved.



AGENCY CONTACTS

- David Mitchell, IVRS Administrator
- Keith Hyland, Chief, Administrative Services Bureau
- Matt Coulter, Chief Financial Officer
- Jeff Haight, Data Specialist

AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN
FY 2011
(Numbers in red indicate actual result)

Name of Agency: Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target(s)	Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living	Wage ratio of IVRS clients to state average	0.52 .62	Goal 1 To maximize every client's opportunity to reach their economic, independence and employment goals.
Desired Outcome(s):			
Full-time, or if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market.			Goal 2 Increase advocacy and support for rights of individuals with disabilities.
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures	Performance Target(s)	Strategies/Recommended Actions
1. Employment (Vocational Rehabilitation) Org# 0001-283-1000 0001-283-2000 0034-283-0704 0366-283-0708 0395-283-0703 0398-283-0093	A. Percent employed (federal reporting) B. Access to services ratio of minority to non-minority clients (federal reporting) C. Number of employment outcomes (federal reporting) D. Number of Self Employment clients who achieve start-up or expansion of a business	A. 55.8% 57.95 B. 0.80 .767 C. 2090 2136 D. 45 40	1. High quality client services and outcomes 2. Comprehensive system of job placement 3. Effective collaboration 4. Manage waiting lists for services
2. Independent Living (Vocational Rehabilitation) Org# 0001-283-0714	A. Percentage of persons meeting their goals B. Number of persons able to continue to live independently in their homes	A. 55% 54% B. 100 55*	1. High quality client services and outcomes 2. Effective collaboration 3. Enhanced external communication
<p style="color: red; font-style: italic;">*Funding dedicated to Independent Living services continues to decrease due to demands of contract monitoring. Also, average expenditure per client case is significantly higher. These factors,</p>			

			along with limited program funds, have affected the number of successful closures.
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Name of Agency: Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target(s)	Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Economic Supports	Percent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards (initial net accuracy)	95% 96.1 %	Goal 1 To maximize every client's opportunity to reach their economic, independence and employment goals.
Desired Outcome(s):			
Economic independence for disabled Iowans through cash benefits, and healthier Iowans through access to Medicare and Medicaid.			
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures	Performance Target(s)	Strategies/Recommended Actions
3. Disability Determination: Initial review of claims and continuing disability reviews (CDR) (Economic Supports Org# 0231-283-0716 0394-283-0702 0394-283-0712 0394-283-0722 0394-283-0723	A. Initial claim processing time B. Percent of budgeted CDRs completed	A. 85 days 73.3 B. 100% 102.3%	1. Develop quality management plan 2. Enhance training where needs are identified

Name of Agency: Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target(s)	Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Agency Resource Management	1. Percent of internal customer satisfaction with key support services 2. Percent of time IT network services are available to staff	1. 85% 85% 2. 95% 98%	Goal 3 Increase capacity to serve all VR clients. Goal 4 Increase interest and satisfaction in VR careers.
Desired Outcome(s):			
Resources are sufficient to provide services per IVRS mission and federal guidelines for Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Determination.			
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures	Performance Target(s)	Strategies/Recommended Actions
4.Infrastructure (Resource Management) Org# 0001-283-3000 0001-283-4000	A. Percent of required non-federal match dollars generated B. Ratio of employees to supervisors C. Inspection results – Parker Building	A. 100% 76.2% B. 12:1 15:1 C. DAS responsibility now as “owner” of the Parker Building	1. Maintain and improve sustainability model and use IRSS to forecast resource needs 2. Not fill supervisory positions automatically when vacancies arise. 3. Maintain contact with DAS regarding maintenance operations in Parker Building.