



Iowa  
Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Services

*Finding solutions. Generating success.*

# **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

## **2011-2014 Strategic Plan**

# Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services 2011 - 2014 Strategic Plan

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# Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services 2011 - 2014 Strategic Plan Guiding Statements

## Our Mission

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

## Our Motto

Finding Solutions. Generating Success.

## Our Vision

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

## Our Guiding Principles

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

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

We operate with trust and integrity.

We demonstrate compassion and respect for all people.

We value continued improvement and learning.

We openly communicate with clarity and consideration.

We are results driven.

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## Assessment

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

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

The State Plan is required to be submitted annually for approval by RSA in order for IVRS to receive Title 1 and Title VI Part B grant funds. The State Plan describes the administrative and operational activities of IVRS, in addition to specific areas that involve public input, waiting list information, an analysis of data, goal planning, and an evaluation of reported progress.

The directives that are reaffirmed by the IVRS State Plan and Strategic Plan originate from the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended)*. This *Act* provides the driving force behind all subsequent policy development, statutory requirements, and regulatory guidance under which IVRS operates. The *Act* includes a mandate for a comprehensive statewide needs assessment to be conducted jointly by IVRS and Iowa's State Rehabilitation Council. The results identified by this assessment of needs are used to inform the IVRS State Plan.

The *Act* is specific regarding the areas that must be addressed when assessing needs. In addition to the overall need for rehabilitation services in the state, the *Act* focuses on several subpopulations and services: individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those in need of supported employment; unserved and underserved individuals, including minorities; individuals served by other parts of the statewide workforce investment system; and establishment, development or improvement of community rehabilitation programs. Information obtained from the needs assessment, coupled with state and national trend data is used by IVRS as a basis to develop goals, objectives and strategies for planning purposes.

Additional information that influences service delivery is also collected from surveys completed by internal staff and clients who have received services from IVRS. The resulting reports are evaluated annually, using state and federal mandates for service provision, in addition to standards IVRS has established as guiding principles. External service providers, as well as agencies with comparable missions or resources for individuals with disabilities, are solicited as partners who contribute to the mission of IVRS.

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Achieving the goals outlined on the IVRS State and Strategic plans require a continual review of measures that assess customer satisfaction and employment outcomes. (Strategic Plan 1, 2; State Plan 4, 5) As part of an overall state initiative, IVRS has incorporated outreach to individuals with minority status. The challenges faced by Iowa minorities, or individuals who are unserved or underserved are addressed collectively in IVRS planning initiatives. (Strategic Plan 1; State Plan 1, 2) Similarly, opportunities to establish or build on collaborative efforts remain critical activities for IVRS staff. With an ongoing focus on individualized, yet innovative services, IVRS strives to balance the challenges created by capacity, unemployment and waiting list issues. (Strategic Plan 3, 4; State Plan 3, 6)

Highlights of the major goals for both the Strategic Plan and the State Plan are listed below.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

1. Develop and deliver customer service that addresses customer needs and requirements.
2. Develop a workforce that identifies and responds to changing workforce and work place needs.
3. Build external collaborative relationships which contribute to improved services for Iowans with disabilities.
4. Establish/maintain financial Accountability/Sustainability resulting in increased service outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

## **STATE PLAN**

1. Improve the retention and rehabilitation rate of clients from diverse backgrounds in the caseload annually.
2. Improve outreach and rehabilitation rates for individuals who are underserved such as individuals with autism spectrum disorder or individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.
3. Collaborate with workforce partners to access work incentives for IVRS clients that achieve successful rehabilitation by annual assessment of strategies.
4. Retain eligible IVRS clients until they become rehabilitated, achieving their optimal level of employment and self-sufficiency, achieving or exceeding strategy measures.

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5. Improve meaningful, sustained employment for supported employment consumers.
6. Track data and assess the effectiveness on the Transition Alliance Project (TAP) and Collaborative Transition Protocol.

IVRS has also made an attempt to integrate the Governor's goals for the State of Iowa into our operational plan. The Governor's priorities are:

1. **200,000 new jobs** - In 2011, IVRS placed 2,136 Iowans with disabilities into competitive employment. Fifty-five new businesses were started and from 2008-2011, 172 new businesses were started and successfully closed by IVRS. Through our Strategic Plan we will be tracking the economic impact and continued success of our employment outcomes on employment in Iowa.
2. **15% Reduction in government** - IVRS provides services to individuals with disabilities that cross many fields, including partnering with the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor. Through the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, individuals with disabilities earned 15.7 million more than was spent on the entire VR Program. One hundred two individuals were on public support for their living expenses and are now supporting themselves; a savings of \$786,804 annually for the state. Future services will continue to be provided in an attempt to positively impact the numbers of individuals who are reliant on other government assistance programs.
3. **25% Increase in family incomes** - For those successful IVRS employment outcomes, there was an increase of 33.5 million from their application status. This is a 68% increase in their incomes as reported at application. Specific standards are in place to continue to measure our impact in this area.
4. **#1 Schools in the nation** - 33% of our referrals come from Iowa school districts for youth in transition. In 2011, 820 students were successfully rehabilitated, working 35 hours a week with average earnings of \$10.78/hour. Over \$5.5 million was spent on tuition assistance for students in our post-secondary training programs to obtain educational and occupational skill training to help compete in today's labor market. This tuition assistance helps maintain affordability for students with disabilities as they seek the academic and vocational skills necessary to compete for employment. Through the Strategic Plan, specific goals have been identified to positively impact transition services and continue to increase IVRS collaboration with school districts across the state.

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

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**Strengths:** Dedicated, professional staff. Work force planning strategies have been in place for several years. Expanding commitment to business relationships. Range, depth and variety of services that can be provided to meet our customer's needs. Sound fiscal management principles with record of none or minimal audit recommendations. Individual Development Plan. Staff leadership plan.

**Weaknesses:** Staff can become content with status quo. Cross training/collaboration among bureaus can be a struggle. Resistance from staff on moving forward with change. Role clarification issues between internal staff and among community partners. Changing technology makes it difficult to stay current with resources available. Need to track, record, and report program and financial data in integrated fashion.

**Opportunities:** Continued growth in business and industry partnerships. National Employment Network. Integration of quality assurance measures into agency operations improvement. Improved internal/external communication through use of technology and consistent communication with field on an on-going basis. Iowa Self-Employment Program. Utilization of internal agency experts to share business practices across agency. Integration of plans for consistency. Internal/external training focused on continued quality improvement.

**Threats:** Changing emphasis on production standards versus quality and program integrity issues. Misperception of service focus. Conflict of state policies impacting hiring/business needs. Loss of knowledge among staff due to turnover, retirement. Community partnerships and lack of collaboration for common vision. Challenges for consistent delivery of service across state offices. Funding issues. Debt reduction occurring at federal level.

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## Goal 1 – Develop and deliver customer service that addresses customer needs and requirements

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each area office demonstrates an improved placement culture.</li> </ul>	1. Training on developing business accounts provided to local office staff.	10% increase of Status 26s, employment outcomes, from prior year, growing annually. RSA Standards and Indicators met.	End of FFY
	2. Professional staff develops business accounts that are discussed and shared with area office and state network as appropriate.		
	3. Training on job development, paid/unpaid OJT and marketing toolkit.	Professional staff achieve between 24 and 26 status 26s.	10/1/2014
	4. Business Director (Barb McClanahan) works with targeted offices in need of business connections.		
	5. Work groups are integrating recommendations to impact employment outcomes with service process changed being communicated through the Coordinating Council – specific attention to targeted State Plan goals related to minority applicants, individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing or Autistic, and effectiveness of Assistive Technology.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training with Supervisors regarding job development and job placement services and identify strategies for area office to implement as part of local action plan.</li> </ul>	1. Manager's retreat develops a blueprint for developing a placement culture.	Number of employment outcomes obtained by area office.	9/30/2016
	2. AO identify their baseline of placement and enact strategies	Number of business accounts	



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| <p>based on the blueprint to move the office to the next level of placement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. BMT follows up with AOs for accountability.</li> <li>4. AO utilize the Business Director to create bridges and connections with business and industry.</li> <li>5. AO are active members of the Chamber where connections with business are developed, are participants on committees, and are considered an essential partner.</li> <li>6. Good news stories from the employer perspective are developed and shared with the community through increased contact/visibility with the communication specialist position providing support.</li> </ol> | <p>and partnerships identified by local office and business director will report area office contacts/business accounts for state-wide sharing.</p> <p>Legislators perceive IVRS as a partner in economic development demonstrated by zero reduction in state funding.</p> <p>Area Offices will report number of new business contacts/collaboration that are developed through analysis of Chamber memberships.</p> |
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness is improved in communicating with job candidates on a consistent and as-needed basis derived by candidate's need.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff engage clientele from intake through closure by addressing their needs and proactively work to motivate the client through the process.</li> <li>2. Staff works within their classifications to achieve a team approach to serve clientele that results in an engaged clientele.</li> <li>3. Staff accurately identify the client's needs (i.e. realistic, etc.) and appropriately respond to focus the client on employment.</li> <li>4. Staff communicates with all customers in a timely manner.</li> <li>5. Staff responds to clients within two working days of an inquiry, telephone call or other type of client initiated contact.</li> </ol>	<p>Decrease by minimum of 10% the number of cases closed status 30 and status 28.</p> <p>AO achieve no more than 10% lapsed dates.</p> <p>Quality Assurance reviews demonstrate a 20% increase in the number of cases exceeding expectations on the QA review questions 26, 30 and 36.</p> <p>Average time to plan development and to closure remains constant or demonstrates improvement..</p>	<p>End of each FFY</p> <p>End of QA Review Year</p> <p>10/2014</p>
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## 6. Quality services are delivered and demonstrated in case reviews.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal customer feedback and recognized quality practices are incorporated into delivery of administrative services.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop and implement survey for staff. Analyze results, both internal and IT and compare to previous results with feedback shared with staff.</p>	<p>Recommendations are included in operational report integrating results of learned survey information.</p>	<p>10/2013</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology services for staff are identified and implemented as feasible with consideration of customer feedback, state IT policies and research focused on use of social media and texting. These IT services relate to improving communication and access with all staff and constituents.</li> </ul>	<p>Technology Management Team is tasked with review and identification of specific tasks necessary to move forward with agency use of social media related tasks.</p>	<p>Social Media plan is implemented. Employment Outcomes are met. RSA Standards and Indicators are met. Public comments are tracked and timely communication occurs. PMT completes review of IRSS instructions resulting in one set of instructions, updated from the old CSR-300 plan.</p>	<p>10/2012</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely responses are tracked and reported per Human Resource inquiries, concerns with full consideration provided to sensitive/confidential and complex subject matter.</li> </ul>	<p>Clear guidelines are posted and available for each checkpoint related to FMLA/Reasonable Accommodations requests and the hiring process. Progress on checkpoints is shared with management staff on minimum of monthly basis.</p>	<p>Checklists available and used by staff with roles and responsibilities clearly identified.</p> <p>Staff hiring plan is tracked to ensure follow-up communication with DAS with consistent review occurring in Chief management meetings..</p>	<p>1/2012</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent Living plan is implemented with services consistent with the IL State Plan and targeted for those clients in the IL Program, but not requiring RSB services.</li> </ul>	<p>Program Manager and related staff communicate collaboratively with Statewide Independent Living Council and internal staff regarding IL Operations.</p> <p>Random case reviews are done with analysis reporting on IL Goals.</p>	<p>IL budget accurately tracks service needs costs meeting audit and grant compliance with zero audit recommendations.</p>	<p>10/2014</p>

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## Goal 2 –

### Develop a workforce that responds to changing workforce and work place needs

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management implement workforce planning consistently and develop, implement training in areas of business, service delivery and community partnerships.</li> </ul>	1. Management analyzes area office workforce needs.	Staff performs within classifications 80% of the time as reviewed.	9/30/2014
	2. Assessment of classifications, priority of work, time studies, and planning is completed.		
	3. Appropriate classifications are identified and hired to fill vacancies, unless DAS, DOM and Governor demands prevent such action.	50% of Leadership Class participants voice an interest in advancement/promotion.	9/30/2012
	4. Participants in the Leadership Class demonstrate individual leadership at the local level.	Work force planning needs are integrated into Business Plan.	9/30/2014
	5. Participants in the leadership class discern their skills and interests for advancement so that there is a ready labor pool for succession planning.		
	6. Collaborate with in-service training grant and RSB to outline training options available for all staff.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamlined claims processing is administered in user friendly manner. Paperless processing is studied and implemented as feasible.</li> </ul>	Team work process from DDS/ASB/RSB is implemented. Recommendations are identified.	DDS claims processing goals met. Unliquidated report is maintained diminishing unpaid accounts at the end of the state and federal fiscal years. Field service claims are processed meeting all audit compliance guidelines.	10/2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further IRSS development; identifying</li> </ul>	Integration of PMT, IRSS Committee,	Financial planning for IT area	10/2014

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revisions/additions with involvement of key parties across bureaus.	and Technology Management Team (TMT) recommendations into cohesive IRSS plan that economically maintains level of service. Revised target dates are consistently reviewed and communicated through TMT	meets sustainability projections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee position descriptions are current and employee performance is connected and understood in relation to agency goals.</li> </ul>	All staff are scheduled for annual performance reviews and receive minimum of bi-annual update reviews.	100% of performance plans are completed with 30 days of scheduled dates. Knowledge transfer is considered as employees near retirement and recommendations are incorporated into performance expectations. <span style="float: right;">10/2012</span>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff attorney provides legal counsel to agency and enhances staff knowledge of state/federal laws and policy regulations.</li> </ul>	Systematize legal work performed for purposes of circulating valuable staff information on a timely and effective basis.	Agency maintains compliance with state/federal laws. Documented trainings and communications are maintained involving field staff demonstrating efforts at providing educational awareness and policy clarification. <span style="float: right;">10/2014</span>



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- discern a viable vocational goal prior to graduation.
7. Students participate in at least two work experiences prior to graduation.
- demonstrates an increase yearly in transition referrals, plans written prior to graduation, and increased employment outcomes
- 10% increase in employment outcomes for transition students yearly.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements with partners, vendors, and other parties are initiated and maintained in a productive, respectful manner so that persons with disabilities receive appropriate services meeting their needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Cross team communication through CORE (Contract Oversight and Review Experts) addresses potential issues with recommendations to resolve. RSB/TAP teams work with local LEAs to develop TAPs increasing employment outcomes for students in transition.</p>	<p>RSA, OMB Circular regulations are met with no audit recommendations.. Employment outcomes met. Third party match increases by 5% while meeting field service needs.</p>	<p>10/2013</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative employment partnerships are maintained with Department of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Workforce Development and Employer Disability Resource Network.</li> </ul>	<p>Communication is maintained with partner agencies focused on effective service delivery for business customers and increased employment outcomes.</p>	<p>Employment Outcomes, Memorandum of Understandings are signed and implemented.</p>	<p>10/2012</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages are in place to integrate State Plan and field office action plans into Strategic Plan, with assistance through SRC. Concepts of innovation, leadership, and service effectiveness guide efforts.</li> </ul>	<p>Work groups have clear communication plans implementing recommendations to move agency forward. Statewide needs assessment incorporates ideas from clients, partners, business and industry and staff, integrating information into operational planning.</p>	<p>Strategic Plan, State Plan and office plans are clearly linked allowing agency to operate within financial parameters and meeting/exceeding SSA and RSA data standards.</p>	<p>10/2014</p>

## Goal 4 –

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## Establish/maintain Financial Accountability/Sustainability resulting in increased service outcomes for individuals with disabilities

Strategies	Actions	Measures	Due By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial resources are accurately predicted, managed and reported with no major audit issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Monthly briefings are accessible to all staff. Management teams communicate financial status and recommend revisions in service operations, as appropriate. Financial planning tools are utilized for predictive ability. Ticket to Work (TTW) teams streamline process and continue to focus on employment strategies to assist in tracking and claiming for payments/reimbursements. All staff has knowledge of TTW process.</p>	<p>Increase of overall dollars available to fund rehabilitation services.</p>	10/2014
	<p>Communication occurs involving the sharing of financial and service information to interested parties providing opportunities for staff to understand relationship of service delivery and financial funding. Actions taken relate to improved agency effectiveness and improved employment outcomes.</p>	<p>Monthly communication occurs regarding financial data pertinent to field operation. Legislative information is available for distribution per SRC guidance.</p>	10/2012

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## Our Assumptions

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- Greater population with significant disabilities
- National push to deliver more direct services
- Global approach to service delivery
- Technology continues to advance
- Client expectation to use technology
- Language and cultural differences will impact service outcomes
- 17% of workforce eligible to retire in next 5 years
- Changing employee expectations for younger/new/different/aging workforce
- Maintaining funding continues to be a challenge
- Continual push to increase client participation
- Important link to IVRS success is tied to counselor education programs



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**NOTES:**