

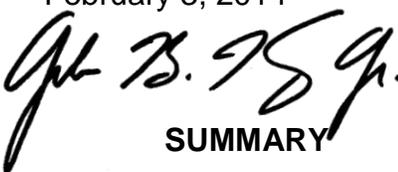


TO: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES)
Committee

FROM: Kevin G. Smith 

SUBJECT: Strategic Planning

DATE: February 3, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Board of Regents with information on new strategic planning initiatives to improve the service delivery system and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For information and discussion in order to obtain the support of the Board of Regents on these proposed initiatives.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Board of Regents ACCES Committee at the February 2014 meeting.

Background Information

In 2012, ACCES initiated a strategic planning process for the vocational rehabilitation program to address emerging challenges in meeting the growing demand and changing expectations for employment of individuals with disabilities. National data suggests that employment outcomes for people with disabilities have not improved over the past two decades. A recent report by Senator Harkin, Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (*High Expectations: Transforming the American Workforce as the ADA Generation Comes of Age, September 2013*), cites a gap in the labor force participation rate exceeding 40% between young adults with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. These disparities are even more pronounced

for racial and ethnic minorities with disabilities and for veterans with disabilities. To meet these challenges, ACCES launched a strategic planning initiative to:

- Improve the availability of vocational rehabilitation services to meet the growing expectations for employment;
- Improve service delivery in the face of staffing reductions within ACCES-VR over the past several years;
- Explore the use of technology to better meet the needs of individuals participating in ACCES-VR services; and,
- Improve the quality of services and the employment outcomes achieved for the diverse constituencies served.

A Strategic Planning Design Team was formed with representatives from all of the functional units within ACCES-VR including fiscal and program managers, business managers, clerical and professional counseling staff. A representative from the State Rehabilitation Council also participates on the Design Team.

The Design Team, with support of a consultant available through the University at Buffalo Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Program facilitated an initial planning phase. The team gathered information from internal and external stakeholders, mapped out critical issues, and surveyed staff throughout the organization. The Design Team formulated a vision statement that continues to be vetted throughout ACCES-VR:

All individuals with disabilities who want to work will have the opportunity to achieve meaningful work.

In addition, the following mission statement was generated to build a shared commitment among the entire ACCES-VR community:

ACCES-VR assists New Yorkers with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment and independent living outcomes through education, rehabilitation and placement services.

The Design Team identified core values which included a commitment to meaningful careers, full community inclusion, and equal opportunities. As the Team began to formulate areas where change was needed, it was charged with focusing on six key areas:

- Service Delivery – the vocational rehabilitation process and scope of services
- Technology – how technology can improve organizational effectiveness
- Human Resources – having the necessary talent
- Partnerships – working with schools, colleges, State agencies and other community partners
- Budgetary, Fiscal, Program and Operational Planning – aligning resources to support program goals

- Communications and Public Information – communicating our purpose to stakeholders

While the Design Team continued to meet quarterly, six work teams were formed for each of these areas and staff throughout the organization were recruited to foster greater participation in the strategic planning process and to tap into the expertise of all ACCES-VR staff.

New Improvement Strategies

These six teams are now in the process of formulating specific recommendations in each of these focus areas. The teams will generate recommendations to ACCES leadership outlining both short-term actions and long-term transformational opportunities. Some teams have already worked on activities related to implementing future changes. For example, the Technology Team worked with the SED Information Technology Office to issue a Request for Information (RFI) on features for a new case management system that would better integrate program, fiscal and data functions. The information gained will enable ACCES to continue planning for a state-of-the-art replacement for the current electronic case management system.

Next Steps

The Design Team will continue its dialogue across each of the functional teams to refine recommendations and identify action items that will leverage significant transformational opportunities. With the support of SED leadership, ACCES will transform Vocational Rehabilitation as an effective and unique resource for assisting New Yorkers with disabilities in gaining meaningful employment.

With support of the Board of Regents, the Department will implement the above actions.