

Attachment 4.11(d)

State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

State Strategies

In attachment 4.11(c)(1), the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) identified the Goals for Federal Fiscal Year 2015 and the Strategies to be utilized to reach these goals. These goals were derived from the needs identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment referenced in Attachment 4.11(a).

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Client Services: Expand service delivery of training opportunities to VR and VRB consumers.

Employability Job Fairs	\$10,000
TEAAM Mississippi Services	\$98,000
Supported Employment Collaboratives	\$100,000
Career Fair for Transition	\$10,000
Assistive Technology on the Road	\$10,000
Career Certificates Collaborations	\$35,000
AbilityWorks Service Expansion	\$60,000

Professional Development Training: Training and Materials development for staff to enhance service delivery to consumers.

Disability Specific Training:	\$50,000
Regional Training Teams:	\$20,000
Autism Toolkit for VR staff:	\$50,000

State Rehabilitation Council Funding: \$21,000.00

State Independent Living Council Funding: \$27,640.00

In FFY 2014, the Governor of Mississippi appointed a new State Independent Living Council (SILC). This body's plans for operation and reports of activities of this Title VII program are reported outside this Title I/Title VI State Plan. The projected budget for FFY 2015 is consistent with the Resource Plan approved by the full SILC.

In addition to utilizing the referenced strategies to meet the Goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1), MDRS will also address the following:

Uses of Assistive Technology Services:

Through the MDRS Assistive Technology (AT) Program, nine Rehabilitation Technologists and two Rehabilitation Engineers are strategically located throughout the state to provide

consultation on all AT referrals as well as perform initial evaluations and assessments; procure and set-up AT equipment; provide follow-up evaluations; design and fabricate original items; and, provide specifications and final inspections for AT services. Counselors evaluate the need for AT services throughout the rehabilitation process.

MDRS utilizes the services of Mississippi Project START (Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology) when clients and other interested parties may need to make informed decisions about available assistive technology services. Services offered by Project START include: 1) device demonstration; 2) device training; 3) public awareness; 4) device loan program; 5) device reutilization program; and, 6) funding information on devices.

MDRS also utilizes the services of the T.K. Martin Center for Technology and Disability at Mississippi State University as well as other qualified AT programs to provide services when appropriate.

Outreach to Minorities:

MDRS will develop a Cultural Diversity Taskforce. This group will develop strategies to reach minority populations. This taskforce will comprise staff from direct service, support and administrative staff. This group will analyze data from current case data, census and other relevant surveys and sources. They will, in turn, make recommendations for service delivery and outreach to minority groups. The taskforce will create plans for facilitated activities in the area of cultural diversity specific to each geographical area. MDRS is committed to outreach and services to this population and has demonstrated its success in this endeavor through exceeding the federal standard for Performance Indicator 2.1 since the inception of this standard.

Identification and Provision of Services to Unserved/Underserved Populations:

MDRS will make every effort to identify and provide services to persons with disabilities deemed to be unserved or underserved by MDRS, or who are presently served by other components of the statewide workforce investment service system and might qualify for MDRS services within the state. Targeted populations whose needs will be addressed include those individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Mental Illness, Intellectual Disabilities, and Developmental Disabilities. In Mississippi we are making every effort to ensure employment is the first option, not the last. Focus on this initiative will be given during FFY 2015.

The incidence of ASD in Mississippi is increasing. In order to serve this population adequately it is necessary to increase the understanding of these disorders and the vocational implications. MDRS has developed a contract with a local autism organization to assist in the development of our skills and knowledge in this area.

Operation and Improvement of Community Rehabilitation Programs:

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) will be monitored and assessed for improvement each year.

Traditionally the CRPs in Mississippi have operated most services within the confines of a facility. However, Community Based Work Evaluation, Job Readiness, and Job Placement are valuable tools in the rehabilitation process leading to successful employment outcomes. Therefore, in 2008 MDRS implemented Linking Innovative Networks of Community Services (LINCS), an innovative program that provides flexible short-term and long-term resources to a wide spectrum of Mississippi businesses and industries. LINCS allows our CRP staff to secure a cooperative agreement with a business in the community to provide evaluation, job readiness or job tryout for our clients. In expansion of this effort, AbilityWorks, Inc., the division name for the MDRS CRPs, will make available Innovation and Expansion funds designated for the purpose of services provided in the community (noted throughout this document).

Assuring Optimal Adherence to Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators:

MDRS has endeavored to stress the importance of the Performance Standards and Indicators at all levels. MDRS managers and counselors are trained on these issues regularly as is demonstrated in the past performance figures. MDRS has never missed on a performance indicator. MDRS State Office staff review these figures monthly and discuss them with field counselors and managers.

Statewide Coverage of Networked Services in the One Stop Centers:

The state's workforce system is referred to as the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) in Mississippi. WIN delivers one-stop employment and training services through a network of 42 One-Stop Career Centers, or WIN Job Centers, throughout the state. Currently, VR is physically located in three WIN Job Centers but is linked to the entire network technologically or in the form of referrals.

The VR partnership within Mississippi's one-stop system is clarified through a Memoranda of Understanding with the State and each of the four local workforce investment areas. The partnership is further enhanced through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, the state designated agency to receive Workforce Investment Act funds and the main operator of the WIN Job Centers, to continually improve the lifestyle, acceptance and accessibility of persons with disabilities within Mississippi's WIN.

Cost Sharing Agreements are negotiated and put in place yearly with operators of the centers where VR staff is located. During Federal Fiscal Year 2013, the VR Program was housed in three WIN Job Centers and expended \$31,150 to support the operation of the one-stop service delivery system in these centers.

Also noteworthy is that VR has in place a Program Coordinator charged with ensuring that: (1) VR is a full partner not only in the centers where VR staff is physically located but throughout Mississippi's one-stop system; (2) services to eligible VR clients will be available and accessible in the WIN Job Centers; and, (3) partnerships with other one-stop system members will result in networking to assure the individual with a disability is involved in a seamless system.

Other Barriers relating to access to the VR and Supported Employment Programs:

No other barriers have been identified at this time. MDRS is committed to providing equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state VR program and the supported employment program regardless of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. VR will work with the Department of Mental Health to develop positive outcomes in cooperation with the Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities Medicaid waiver.