I. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The purpose of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act), which authorizes the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Program, is to assist States in operating statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable VR programs, each of which is: (1) an integral part of a statewide workforce investment system; and (2) designed to assess, plan, develop, and provide VR services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that such individuals may prepare for and engage in gainful employment (Section 100(a)(2) of the Act (29 USC 720(a)(2))).
II. PROGRAM PROCEDURES

Federal funds are distributed to the States on a formula basis with the States required to provide a 21.3 percent match. The program is administered by an agency designated by the State as having overall administrative responsibility for the VR program. If the designated State agency is not an agency primarily concerned with VR, or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, it must include a designated State unit within the agency that is responsible for the designated State agency’s VR program (State VR Agency).

The States must submit to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) a State Plan that provides both assurances and descriptions that are required by Title I of the Act and the implementing regulations (34 CFR part 361). The State Plan is one of the key bases of RSA’s monitoring of the State’s administration of the VR program.

Services are provided either directly by State VR Agency staff or purchased from community-based vendors. Services, except those of an assessment nature, are provided under the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), as determined by the individual, which can be developed by the individual, or with assistance provided by others, including a qualified VR counselor employed by the State VR Agency, to achieve an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and informed choice.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, as amended (WIA), requires the VR program to collaborate with other workforce development, educational, and human resource programs in a one-stop service delivery system. The WIA’s objective is to create a seamless delivery system by linking the agencies operating these programs in order to provide universal access to the programs operated by each agency. While the one-stop system operates as a common portal for gaining access to these programs, each program provides its respective services to persons meeting its respective eligibility criteria.

Agencies responsible for administering the programs whose services are delivered in a one-stop system are known as “partners;” those whose participation is mandated by the WIA, including the State VR agency, are “required partners.” Each partner must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Local Workforce Investment Board regarding the operation of the one-stop system. The MOU covers the services to be provided through the one-stop system, funding for those services and for the system’s administrative costs, and the methods for referring individuals between one-stop operators and partners. It establishes how each partner will participate in the one-stop system and share in the cost of operating it. Each partner’s resources may be used only for: (1) services that are authorized under that partner’s program and delivered to clients eligible for those services; and (2) administrative costs allocable to the partner’s program.

In addition to the MOU required by the WIA, the Rehabilitation Act requires that a State VR agency’s State Plan provide for a network of cooperative agreements binding that agency’s central and local offices to the central and local offices, respectively, of the other partners in the one-stop service delivery system. States can choose to use the same document to meet the requirements for both the MOU and the cooperative agreements. As used henceforth in this discussion, “MOU” refers to whatever document(s) a State agency uses to meet these requirements.
Funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (Pub. L. No. 111-5) were distributed to the States on a formula basis. States received an initial funding of 50 percent of their ARRA VR awards (CFDA 84.390) in April 2009 on the basis of their eligibility for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 non-ARRA VR State Grant awards (CFDA 84.126) and submission of the certification required by Section 1607 of ARRA. States did not need to submit a new State Plan or assurances to receive this initial funding. The assurances in a State’s approved FY 2009 State plan for their non-ARRA VR funds, as well as the requirements of ARRA, apply to the use of the ARRA VR funds. The second half of the awards were made in August 2009. States were not required to submit additional documentation to receive these funds. By accepting the second half ARRA VR funds, States agreed to comply with all accountability and reporting requirements in Section 1512 of ARRA.

Source of Governing Requirements

The VR program is authorized by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 USC 701 et seq.). The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 are found in Title IV of the WIA. The ARRA VR program is also authorized by ARRA. Program regulations are found at 34 CFR part 361. In addition, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) at 34 CFR parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86 apply to this program. Requirements in 20 CFR part 662 (Description of the One-Stop Service Delivery System) also apply to the extent that VR activities are being conducted as part of a one-stop service delivery system.

III. COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

A. Activities Allowed or Unallowed

1. Services to Individuals

   Services provided under the VR program are any services described in an IPE necessary to assist an individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. Section 103(a) of the Act (29 USC 723(a)) contains examples of the types of services that can be provided.

2. Services to Groups

   The State VR Agency may provide other services to groups of individuals with disabilities (Section 103(b) of the Act (29 USC 723(b)):

   a. In the case of any type of small business operated by individuals with significant disabilities the operation of which can be improved by management services and supervision provided by the designated State agency, the provision of such services and supervision, along or together with the acquisition by the designated State agency of vending facilities or other equipment and initial stocks and supplies.

   b. Community Rehabilitation Programs - The establishment, development, or improvement of a public or other non-profit community rehabilitation program
including, under special circumstances, the construction of a facility for a public or non-profit community rehabilitation program.

c. The provision of other services, that promise to contribute substantially to the rehabilitation of a group of individuals but that are not related directly to the individualized plan for employment of any one individual with a disability.

d. Telecommunications systems that have the potential for substantially improving vocational rehabilitation service delivery methods and developing appropriate programming to meet the particular needs of individuals with disabilities.

e. Special services to provide non-visual access to information for individuals who are blind, including telecommunications, Braille, sound recordings or other appropriate media; captioned television, films, or video cassettes for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; tactile materials for individuals who are deaf-blind; and other special services that provide information through tactile, vibratory, auditory, and visual media.

f. Technical assistance and support services to businesses that are not subject to Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and that are seeking to employ individuals with disabilities.

g. Consultative and technical assistance services to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including employment.

3. Participation in a One-Stop Service Delivery System

Any service or administrative cost charged to the VR programs through participation in the one-stop service delivery system must be: (a) allowable under the program’s authorizing statute and regulations; (b) allocable to the program under the State VR agency’s cost allocation plan; and (c) consistent with the MOU between the State VR agency and the Local Workforce Investment Board. The MOU is the primary vehicle by which the State VR agency sets forth how it will participate in the one-stop service delivery system and how it will share in the cost of operating the system (29 USC 2841(b)(1)(B)(iv); 34 CFR section 361.4; 20 CFR part 662; Notice: Resource Sharing for Workforce Investment Act One-Stop Centers: Methodologies for Paying or Funding Each Partner Program’s Fair Share of Allocable One-Stop Costs, issued May 31, 2001 (66 FR 29637)).

The MOU identifies the resources the State VR agency will provide for compliance with 20 CFR section 662.270, which requires the VR programs to support a fair share of the one-stop system’s common administrative costs. The amount provided must be proportionate to the use of the system by individuals attributable to this program. The MOU may provide for cash payments of billings from the one-stop operator, or for providing goods and services that benefit the system’s operation. Examples of goods and services that the VR agency may provide for this purpose include: (a) making VR staff available to provide training or technical assistance to other partners in such areas as disability, accessibility, adaptive equipment, and rehabilitation engineering; (b) VR staff participation in cooperative efforts with employers to promote job placement (such as job
analysis and employer visits); and (c) applying VR staff and other resources to the VR program’s participation in information and financial management systems that link all partners to one another.

C. Cash Management

See ED Cross-Cutting Section

E. Eligibility

1. Eligibility for Individuals

An individual is eligible for VR services if the individual (a) has a physical or mental impairment that, for the individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; (b) can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from VR services; and (c) requires VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment (Section 102(a)(1) of the Act (29 USC 722(a)(1))).

An individual who is a beneficiary of Social Security Disability Insurance or a recipient of Supplemental Security Income is presumed to be eligible for VR services (provided that the individual intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual) unless the State VR Agency can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such individual is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from VR services due to the severity of the disability of the individual (Section 102(a)(3) of the Act (29 USC 722(a)(3))).

An individual is presumed to be able to benefit in terms of an employment outcome from VR services unless the State VR Agency can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from VR services due to the severity of the individual’s disability. This determination must be made through the use of trial work experiences with appropriate supports provided by the State VR Agency, except under limited circumstances when the individual can not take advantage of such experiences (Section 102(a)(2) of the Act (29 USC 722(a)(2))).

The State VR Agency must determine whether an individual is eligible for VR services within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 60 days, after the individual has submitted an application for the services unless (Section 102(a)(6) of the Act (29 USC 722(a)(6)):

a. Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the State VR agency preclude making an eligibility determination within 60 days and the State agency and the individual agree to a specific extension of time; or

b. The State VR Agency is exploring an individual’s abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations through trial work experiences in order to determine the eligibility of the individual or the existence of clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from VR services.
The State may choose to consider the financial need of eligible individuals, or individuals who are receiving services during a trial work experience or an extended evaluation, for the purpose of determining the extent of their participation in the cost of VR services. The State may not consider financial need when providing services described in 34 CFR section 361.54(b)(3). If the State indicates in its State Plan that it will use financial need tests for one or more types of VR services, it must apply such tests in accordance with its written policies uniformly to all individuals under similar circumstances. The policies may require different levels of need for different geographic regions in the State, but must be applied uniformly to all individuals within each geographic region (34 CFR section 361.54).

2. **Eligibility for Group of Individuals or Area of Service Delivery** - Not Applicable

3. **Eligibility for Subrecipients** - Not Applicable

**G. Matching, Level of Effort, Earmarking**

1. **Matching**

   a. **For the regular VR State Grants program.** The State share of expenditures made by the State VR Agency under the State Plan, including expenditures for the provision of VR services and the administration of the State Plan, is 21.3 percent (Sections 7(14) and 111(a)(1) of the Act (29 USC 705(14) and 731(a)(1))).

   b. **For the regular VR State Grants program.** The Federal share of expenditures made for the construction of a facility for community rehabilitation program purposes may not be more than 50 percent of the total cost of the project (34 CFR section 361.60(a)(2)).

   c. **There are no matching requirements for expenditures made under the ARRA VR program** (ARRA, 123 Stat. 183).

2.1 **Level of Effort - Maintenance of Effort**

   a. The amount otherwise payable to a State for a fiscal year under this section shall be reduced by the amount by which expenditures from non-Federal sources under the State Plan for the previous fiscal year are less than the total of such expenditures for the fiscal year two years prior to the previous fiscal year. For example, for fiscal year 2001, a State’s maintenance-of-effort level is based on the amount of its expenditures from non-Federal sources for fiscal year 1999. Thus, if the State’s non-Federal expenditures in fiscal year 2001 are less than they were in fiscal year 1999, the State has a maintenance of effort deficit, and the Secretary reduces the State’s allotment for fiscal year 2002 by the amount of that deficit (Section 111(a)(2)(B) of the Act (29 USC 731(a)(2)(B)); 34 CFR section 361.62).

   b. If the State Plan provides for the construction of a facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, the amount of the State’s share of expenditures for a fiscal year for VR services under the Plan, other than for the construction of a facility for community rehabilitation program purposes or the establishment of a facility for
community rehabilitation purposes, must be at least equal to the State’s share of those expenditures for the second prior fiscal year (34 CFR section 361.62).

2.2 Level of Effort – Supplement Not Supplant – Not Applicable

3. Earmarking – Not Applicable

H. Period of Availability of Federal Funds

Federal funds appropriated for a fiscal year under the regular VR State Grants program remain available for obligation in the succeeding fiscal year only to the extent that the State VR Agency met the matching requirement for those Federal funds by obligating, in accordance with 34 CFR section 76.707, the non-Federal share in the fiscal year for which the funds were appropriated. Any program income received during a fiscal year that is not obligated by the State VR Agency by the end of that fiscal year will remain available for obligation by the State VR Agency during the succeeding fiscal year (Section 19 of the Act (29 USC 716); 34 CFR section 361.64).

Federal funds appropriated under the ARRA VR program are available for obligation beginning with the date of enactment of ARRA, February 17, 2009. ARRA VR funds remain available for obligation by States until September 30, 2011, which includes the one-year carryover period authorized under section 19 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 1603 of ARRA and 29 USC 716).

J. Program Income

Sources of program income include, but are not limited to, payments from the Social Security Administration for rehabilitating Social Security beneficiaries, payments received from workers’ compensation funds, fees for services to defray part or all of the costs of services provided to particular individuals, and income generated by a State-operated community rehabilitation program.

Except as indicated below, program income, whenever earned, must be used for the provision of VR services and the administration of the State Plan under the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. Program income is considered earned when it is received (Section 108 of the Act (29 USC 728); 34 CFR section 361.63).

The State VR Agency is authorized to treat program income as a deduction from total allowable costs or as an addition to the grant funds to be used for additional allowable program expenditures, in accordance with 34 CFR sections 80.25(g)(1) or (2) (34 CFR section 361.63).

L. Reporting

1. Financial Reporting

   b. SF-269, Financial Status Report – Applicable
c. SF-270, *Request for Advance or Reimbursement* - Only grantees placed on reimbursement are required to complete this form to request payment of grant award funds. The requirement to use this form is imposed on an individual recipient basis.

d. SF-271, *Outlay Report and Request for Reimbursement for Construction Programs* - Not Applicable

e. SF-272, *Federal Cash Transactions Report* - Not Applicable


g. RSA-2, *Program Cost Report (OMB No. 1820-0017)* – State VR agencies submit the RSA-2 annually.

2. **Performance Reporting** – Not Applicable

3. **Special Reporting** – Not Applicable

4. **Section 1512 ARRA Reporting** – Applicable