

**NEVADA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (N.S.R.C.)  
STATE PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 09, 2025, at 1 pm

**Physical Meeting Locations:**

Vocational Rehabilitation  
1325 Corporate Boulevard, Reno, NV 89502  
&  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
3016 W. Charleston Blvd., Suite 210, Las Vegas, NV 89102

**SUBCOMMITTEE COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jack Mayes (Chair)  
Drazen Elez, VR Administrator  
Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs  
Raquel O'Neill  
Cynthia Gustafson  
Robin Kincaid  
Laura Thompson

**STAFF:**

Joeseeph Ostunio, Deputy Attorney General  
Stephanie Itkin, Deputy Attorney General  
Brett Martinez, VR Deputy Administrator Operations  
Sheena Childers, VR Bureau Chief  
Lisa McCulloch, Quality Control Specialist II  
Marla Robinson, Management Analyst IV  
Trina Bourke, VR Southern District Manager  
Matthew Dorangricchia, VR Northern District Manager  
Marshal Hernanadez, VR Statewide District Manager  
Jacqueline Quintero, Administrative Assistant III  
Uriah Carter, Administrative Assistant II

**GUESTS/PUBLIC:**

Steven Cohen  
Sandra Sinicrope  
Kate Osti, NDALC  
Whitney Hobbs, American Sign Language (ASL) Translator  
Tamara Russell, ASL Translator

**1. CALL TO ORDER, QUORUM CONFIRMATION, AND AGENDA POSTING VERIFICATION**

Jack Mayes, Subcommittee Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm, welcoming attendees and thanking members for their participation. Jenny Richter, NSRC Liaison, facilitated the roll call, confirmed that a quorum was present, and verified the posting was done in accordance with Open Meeting Law (OML).

**2. FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Mayes opened the floor for public comments. Legal notice was read, and the meeting phone number was provided.

Robin Kincaid, Council Member, raised a question about discrepancies between printed binders and electronic materials provided via email. Chair Mayes and NSRC liaison Richter clarified that the most recent email contained the most current and complete documents, including an updated version of the goals and indicators, which had been included in this email with other materials as a reference. Jenny also confirmed an additional email would be sent to clarify the materials for Tab 5, which were standard documents from the May 6<sup>th</sup> council meeting. Chair Mayes assured members that all documents would be clearly referenced during the discussion, and the team aims to improve document distribution ahead of the full September council meeting.

**3. OVERVIEW OF TITLE 34 CFR 361.17(H) FUNCTIONS AS IT RELATES TO THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNCIL**

Chair Mayes referenced CFR 361, as it relates to the responsibilities of the Council, noting that this item was included in the meeting materials primarily for reference and not intended for detailed discussion unless there were specific questions.

Drazen Elez, VR Administrator, highlighted the significance of page 3, particularly section H. Which outlines the functions of the council. He emphasized that this section is key for understanding the council's role in collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The section details responsibilities numbered one through eight and spans to the following page.

Chair Mayes thanked Mr. Elez and opened the floor for any questions; there were no further comments. Meeting advanced to next agenda item.

**4. 2024 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Chair Mayes introduced Agenda Item 4, the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, and emphasized its importance in identifying areas of strength and for improvement within Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

Mr. Elez provided an overview of the survey's findings, noting several key strengths, including a 90% client recommendation rate and an 87% satisfaction rate with staff treatment and assistance. The report was based on a significant sample size of over 1,500 clients, ensuring a representative pool of data. Positive outcomes also included improvements in application accessibility and language inclusivity, as well as ongoing efforts to enhance technology and communication tools. However, He acknowledged several key challenges: 31% of clients reported communication issues, 25% cited slow service, and 45% had experienced counselor turnover, which led to confusion and delays. He attributed these challenges largely to the sharp increase in applications and intake demands, which have strained staff capacity. He noted that new staffing approved during the recent legislative session should alleviate some of these issues, with improvements expected by the end of the year. Lastly, only 70% of clients reported satisfaction with their employment outcomes, highlighting another area for ongoing improvement efforts.

Chair Mayes continued to second portion of the agenda item, covering services for older individuals who are blind. It was noted that the council does not currently set specific goals for this population due to the relatively limited scope and funding of the program—approximately \$280,000 annually, compared to the \$32 million general VR grant. Chair Mayes then inquired about the youth in transition section.

Mr. Elez confirmed that there are two established goals: increasing participation of students with disabilities in Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) and tracking the transition of those students into full VR services.

Robin Kincaid raised several data-related concerns, requesting additional tracking on the percentage of clients who experience counselor changes, how often clients request a new counselor, and whether there were delays in developing the Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) pushing them past the 90-day development window. She emphasized the importance of this information for understanding and addressing service challenges, especially related to communication and the continuity of care.

Chair Mayes responded by pointing out that the summary already noted that 45% of clients had more than one counselor in the duration of their service and 44% said it caused confusion or delays.

Member Kincaid clarified her concern that not all counselor changes stem from staff turnover and that other internal factors may also contribute, warranting further investigation.

In this segment, Mr. Elez responded to Council Member Kincaid's earlier questions by clarifying how the agency monitors compliance with the federally mandated 90-day timeline for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). He confirmed that the agency closely tracks cases approaching the 90-day limit, and

while extensions are allowed, they must be documented and signed by both the counselor and the client. Extensions are used in a small percentage of cases, typically when clients are navigating more complex situations such as educational planning. Mr. Elez noted that this area has improved significantly, with internal compliance processes in place and no recent audit findings related to IPE timelines. Regarding counselor changes, he acknowledged that most are due to staff turnover, but not all, with some resulting from internal restructuring or shifting caseloads. Each departure usually involves at least two counselor transitions: a temporary assignment followed by a permanent one. Currently, the agency does not track the number of counselor changes or client-initiated requests for a new counselor, but Mr. Elez committed to speaking with the data team to explore whether such reporting could be developed for future review.

Chair Mayes asked if there were any further questions related to the consumer satisfaction survey; there were no further comments. Meeting advanced to next agenda item.

#### **5. DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR STATE PLAN GOALS STRATEGIES PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Chair Mayes introduced Agenda Item 5, which focused on reviewing the current Federal Fiscal Year State Plan goals, strategies, and performance measures. He indicated that the council would begin by discussing the document entitled *FY24–FY25 NSRC State Plan*. The first goal under review was “increasing the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes,” a long-standing core objective of the agency.

Chair Mayes invited comments on whether to retain, alter, or expand upon the current goals and strategies listed.

He emphasized the importance of systematically reviewing each goal along with its strategies and related performance measures, encouraging council members to consider whether updates were necessary.

Afterwards, the Subcommittee reviewed the materials as such: first discussing each goal and its strategies, then presenting data to assess past performance outcomes, and finally determining updated targets for the next two years.

*Goal Number One: increasing the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes.*

Mr. Elez read the strategies and measures to the NSRC council. Mr. Elez noted that the key measure for this goal is the number of clients whose cases closed with successful employment outcomes (90 days employed or longer). Strategies for achieving this goal included quickly filling counselor vacancies, which was difficult during the COVID-19 period, although has since largely been addressed.

Chair Mayes opened the floor for comments, suggestions, or strategies.

Raquel O'Neill, Council Member, raised a couple of questions. First, she asked whether the goal itself had a specific numerical target and how those are being measured. Mr. Elez clarified that this would be discussed shortly using an additional document.

Council Member O'Neill emphasized the importance of setting a measurable, Specific Measurable Achievement Relevant and Time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goal. She agreed that Strategy One might now be outdated due to improved staffing levels but suggested replacing it with a strategy that addresses counselor turnover, delayed services, and communication issues—concerns highlighted in the consumer satisfaction survey. She also recommended adding a strategy around vendor utilization, noting that VR currently works with a large number of vendors (e.g., 811 at one point), and that this could be better leveraged in service delivery. During the discussion of Goal #1 -Increase the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes- several participants identified opportunities to modernize and strengthen the strategies to reflect current realities and improve service delivery. One key concern was that some strategies appear outdated, particularly the first strategy referencing high vacancy rates among Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the vacancy rate has significantly decreased, the recommendation was to revise this language to focus more on minimizing service disruption during staff transitions rather than simply filling vacancies. A proposed revision would emphasize developing internal strategies to maintain continuity of care and improve the handoff process when counselor changes occur.

Additionally, Council Member O'Neill and Mr. Elez discussed the importance of vendors in the VR process, noting that vendors often provide essential services directly to clients. However, there is currently no strategy addressing vendor quality or accountability. A new strategy was proposed to enhance vendor management by implementing quality assurance measures and regular feedback mechanisms to ensure effective, respectful service delivery. Another strategy in need of revision is the one referencing the development of an employer recognition program. Since such a program has already been established and implemented, the suggestion was to update the language to reflect its current status and support its continued use and potential expansion.

Questions were also raised by Council Member O'Neill regarding counselor turnover and the need for better customer service and communication. Individuals with disabilities and their families sometimes feel undervalued or shuffled between staff without clear transitions. To address this, a new strategy could be added to provide ongoing staff training in customer service, effective communication, and relationship-building to ensure clients feel supported and respected throughout the VR process. Potential solutions could be discussed at the full September meeting.

The importance of counselor training in areas such as assistive technology and quality improvement was emphasized by Mr. Elez. He noted that the agency

already conducts regular internal training and uses feedback and audit data to inform its training strategy. To align with this, an updated strategy should reflect the agency's commitment to expanding counselor training based on emerging needs and continuous quality improvement. Overall, the recommended changes to Goal #1 aim to ensure all strategies are up-to-date, client-focused, and aligned with both operational capacity and stakeholder feedback.

Regarding employment programs, it was confirmed that the State's 700 Hour program and the federal Schedule A hiring authority remain highly effective tools for placing individuals with disabilities in jobs. In fact, Nevada is currently the second-highest state employer of individuals with disabilities due to the 700 Hour program. A dedicated staff position has recently been added to manage the program, further enhancing its impact.

Member O'Neill emphasized her previous point about improving and upscaling staff skills, which could be discussed at future meetings, including speaking with VR Training Officer Dale McWilliams about which sorts of trainings would be beneficial.

Chair Mayes asked if there were any further questions regarding Goal #1.

Mr. Elez and Member O'Neill mentioned the need for optimization of the case transfer process in order to lessen disruptions. This would be key amongst the strategies discussed, as well as improving vendor quality and options, in addition to aforementioned staff trainings. Internal processes would be developed to implement these. Mr. Elez suggested that while specific wording for additional strategies wasn't finalized, staff would draft the language based on Council input, circulate it, and confirm it at the next NSRC meeting.

Chair Mayes asked for the presentation of the data on Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes.

Past goals from 2020 to 2025 were reviewed, noting challenges in reaching desired numbers due to factors such as rising application volumes and staff turnover. Mr. Elez recommended revising the targets to 550 for 2026 and 575 for 2027, expressing optimism that new legislative hires would ease current workload burdens and help improve outcomes.

Chair Mayes invited feedback on these proposed adjustments.

Council Member O'Neill raised a question regarding the rationale behind the proposed employment goal of 550 clients, asking whether there was a measurable benchmark tied to unemployment rates or population data.

Mr. Elez explained that while Nevada has approximately 280,000 individuals with disabilities, estimating how many are eligible or seeking services is difficult, and

the goal is based more on internal capabilities than external need. The agency cannot serve the full population of unemployed individuals with disabilities and thus sets realistic, incremental targets based on past performance and available resources.

Chair Mayes asked about the relationship between increased staffing and potentially reducing client numbers.

Ms. Merrill responded that despite reduced vacancies, staff training time and application volume still present challenges. Adding further that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) historically encouraged yearly goal increases based on prior closures.

Mr. Elez additionally clarified that RSA measures success through employment rates rather than specific numerical goals, using data matched with the state's employment records.

Chair Mayes asked whether, in the interest of time, the committee would agree to set a provisional goal of 550 employed clients for 2026 and 575 for 2027, with the understanding that the figures could be revisited in future meetings.

Council Member Kincaid expressed concern about not returning to the earlier target of 822 but supported the incremental increase, agreeing to move ahead for the time being. Chair Mayes asked that the information be placed in the draft for future discussion. There were no further questions or comments on Goal #1.

Chair Mayes began the review and discussion of *Goal #2, which aims to increase the participation of students with disabilities in pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS)*. Strategies for this goal increase collaboration between the DoE Office of Inclusive Education and VR, among others listed in the documentation. After reviewing the list of strategies for this goal, Chair Mayes asked for Member Kincaid's input, since services to children and youth are her area of expertise.

Member Kincaid expressed a desire for data and percentages of how many students are receiving Pre-ETS services in a school setting versus other venues such as camps and workshops within VR. She also asked about the general sense of success that agency advertisements are having.

Ms. Merrill noted that Pre-ETS clients are coming to the agency in numbers both inside and outside of schools. Our summer camp season is just finishing and our Summer Youth Internship Program is upcoming. Ms. Merrill expressed enthusiasm about the anticipated results of the camps and SYIP. She further noted that the data does show greater deliveries within the classroom setting, this is due to existing district partnerships and economies of scale, where multiple students have a single instructor, whereas outside of the classroom is more individualized.

Council Member Kincaid and Ms. Merrill both went on to suggest updating strategy language to reflect the renaming of the Department of Education office and incorporating support for the Nevada Transition Resource Integration Project (TRIP).

Chair Mayes thanked Ms. Merrill and Member Kincaid for touching on the Nevada TRIP and asked if there were further comments on this item.

Mr. Elez noted that, whenever deemed appropriate by the Council, information on the number of students served in schools and other venues could be provided.

Chair Mayes went on to note the data provided in the Goals and Strategies document showing the participation in Pre-ETS services by students with disabilities over the last several years, noting the significant drop off during COVID and the rise in numbers thereafter. This rebuilding effort post-COVID included staffing increases and infrastructure development. Based on current trends and improved capacity, the committee agreed to set increased participation goals of 2,200 students in 2026 and 2,300 in 2027. Mr. Elez will update the draft accordingly.

Chair Mayes continued onto *Goal #3, which focuses on increasing the participation of potentially eligible students with disabilities in vocational rehabilitation (VR) services*. As per regulatory guidelines, these students are defined as individuals aged 14 to 21 who are enrolled in an educational program and either have a Section 504 accommodation or are receiving services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Chair Mayes recited the bullet points listed in the document for this goal. Strategies for increasing participation included working with our partner entities and hosting more events at schools to discuss the benefits of VR services. He noted similarities between this goal and our goals for Pre-ETS clients and asked if there was overlap.

Mr. Elez confirmed that, yes, there exists some overlap between these two categories of clients, although this goal is more about expanding services to those who are *potentially* eligible for them as opposed to those who are or have previously received services. Additionally, the goal refers to how many of those students who were part of Pre-ETS went on to receive full VR services afterwards.

Several strategies were outlined to support this goal. These include enhancing collaboration among the Nevada Department of Education's Office of Inclusive Education (NDOE/OIE), school districts, and VR agencies; utilizing web-based outreach to connect with students and their support networks; expanding outreach to transition-age youth including those in alternative settings like hospitals or incarceration; engaging charter and private schools; assigning VR transition coordinators to build and manage pre-employment programs in schools; and improving education for teachers, parents, and caregivers on the VR process. Additional strategies involve VR staff attending IEP meetings and school events,

promoting family involvement through partnerships with Nevada PEP and community organizations, and refining the school referral process.

Chair Mayes opened the floor for additional questions.

Cynthia Gustafson, Council Member, asked for a clarification on the language used in the documentation as to precisely which students are being referred in this section.

Bureau Chief Sheena Childers, Clarified the language to indicate that students need only be receiving services under an IEP, without assuming that transition services are included, as not all IEPs—especially for younger students—contain transition planning.

Member Gustafson thanked Ms. Childers for her clarification.

Member Kincaid asked about Pre-ETS age clients and the subject of incomplete or non-compliant IEPs, as well as when services are not properly being delivered. She further asked whether those identified in this overarching goal are the same and whether they meet the criteria for the SYIP.

Ms. Childers answered that in order for an individual to be eligible for the SYIP, they have to be a VR client, so the discussion isn't necessarily about those students with a disability who are potentially eligible.

Member Kincaid suggested moving the relevant strategy under the previous goal for the sake of clarity. Ms. Childers agreed.

Chair Mayes noted that the measurement data showed that the number of applications from potentially eligible students has significantly increased since 2021, rising from 147 to over 900 in 2024. Given this growth, Chair Mayes asked Mr. Elez if VR could revise the annual targets upward to 1,100 for 2026 and 1,250 for 2027.

Mr. Elez noted that current measures used by the agency may not be as accurate in helping identify increases of potentially eligible students, but that recent changes to RSA reporting and the internal case management system now allow for more complete tracking of the number of potentially eligible students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) that go on to become VR clients. To preserve historical data while adopting this improved metric, the subcommittee council agreed to maintain the current measurement during a transition period and to add a new column to track the updated data. This dual-measure approach will allow for a smooth shift to more precise performance tracking in future years.

Chair Mayes moved onto Goal 4, which aims to increase participation and improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for supported employment

consumers in Vocational Rehabilitation. The goal was presented along with a comprehensive set of strategies to support its implementation. These included expanding partnerships with regional centers, offering quality training to VR staff and NSRC members on supported employment, identifying evidence-based practices to promote high-wage and career-track employment, and continuing involvement with the Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Committee and the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN).

Additional strategies involved utilizing data from consumer satisfaction surveys, ensuring continuity of and access to assistive technology, expanding job shadowing and mentorship opportunities, increasing access to job development services through ACRE-certified providers, encouraging employer flexibility through job carving and other models, developing customized employment options, and creating alternative pathways for long-term support and extended service provision. Encouraging active use of established VR programs, such as Pathways to Work and Path to Independence, was also emphasized.

Council Member Kincaid sought clarification on specific strategies. She requested more detail on what was meant by "supports", in the context of partnerships with regional centers and noted that the Council has not received adequate training related to supported employment. She further asked about the current role of regional centers in providing ongoing employment support after VR case closure and inquired about the expectations that exist for those centers.

Ms. Merrill explained that, while VR helps individuals secure employment, ongoing support after case closure is expected to be provided by regional centers. However, many regional centers lack the necessary funding, creating ethical challenges for VR in initiating employment support that cannot be sustained. She noted that without regional center involvement, only natural supports, such as coworkers, family, or community members, are available, which is not always sufficient.

Council Member Kincaid suggested that this be reworded in the report, and that this particular situation may need to be revisited. She then pointed out that the strategy that referenced VR participation in the Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Committee may not be accurate, due to there not being any known VR representative on that committee.

Ms. Merrill acknowledged that this may be due to recent staff attrition and will require further investigation. Similarly, Council Member Kincaid inquired about VR representation in the State Employment Leadership Network.

Ms. Childers confirmed that there is currently no VR member involved, prompting council Member Kincaid to suggest reconsidering or revising the strategy to reflect actual capabilities and current participation.

Additional discussion included the need to clarify the strategy about “creating customized employment options,” as Council Member Kincaid found the term unclear.

Ms. Merrill explained that in VR practice, customized employment involves developing roles based on an individual’s strengths and interests, rather than fitting them into pre-existing job categories.

Council Member Kincaid recommended rewording it to include exploration or better define its intent. She also commented on the strategy to “develop a pathway for long-term supports,” noting that it ties back to the earlier issue of limited regional center capacity and should be reconsidered for feasibility. Finally, she questioned the meaning of “develop alternative options for extended service providers.”

Ms. Merrill confirmed that this refers to identifying other sources of long-term follow-along support when regional centers are unable to fulfill that role.

Council Member Kincaid initiated a discussion about the possibility of some proposed strategies being repetitive or overlapping in meaning. She emphasized the importance of ensuring strategies are distinct and meaningful rather than duplicative.

Ms. Merrill responded by acknowledging that while the strategies may not be exact duplicates, some do address similar concerns and could potentially be combined into more concise, streamlined statements.

Council Member Kincaid also suggested spelling out acronyms like SYIP (Summer Youth Internship Program) and clarifying the names of other employment programs, such as Pathway to Work and Path to Independence, to ensure accessibility and understanding for all stakeholders. It was confirmed that Pathway to Work is a program in Las Vegas in partnership with Clark County, aimed at giving students community-based work experience.

Chair Mayes asked if there were any further comments on this item, before then raising a point under Strategy #2 of this goal, regarding the need for improved Council education on supported employment. He noted some confusion about VR’s role and control over related funding, especially as some of the funding is federally distributed to regional centers.

Brett Martinez, VR Deputy Administrator Operations, clarified that the RSA-supported employment grant comes directly to VR and is limited in size (around \$300,000), and that VR uses these funds to support clients who meet specific criteria, similar to the funding received for Older Blind Individuals.

Ms. Childers elaborated further, explaining the distinction between VR and regional center definitions and roles in providing supported employment services. VR offers

initial job coaching and support for individuals with significant disabilities, while regional centers provide longer-term maintenance support, including options like mobile work crews and community-based employment. She highlighted how both agencies may serve the same clients at different stages.

Council Member Kincaid also requested clarification on a measure related to “closure date is null,” expressing confusion about the terminology.

Mr. Elez explained this was technical data language meaning cases that are still open and active in the system. He assured the Council that this was standard terminology used by their data team to define current clients within various service stages.

Chair Mayes requested data on Goal Number 4 to be displayed before requesting help from Drazen Elez.

Mr. Elez explained that the data includes four columns: federal fiscal year, total open supported employment (SE) cases, the number of closed cases with an employment outcome, and the agency’s goal for open SE cases. He clarified that while both open and closed cases are tracked, the goal has focused on increasing the number of open SE cases to expand participation in services. Mr. Elez highlighted that in fiscal year 2020, there were 529 open SE cases with a goal of 786; by 2021, the number rose to 812, surpassing the goal again. In subsequent years, the total open SE cases continued to grow, reaching 689 in 2025, exceeding that year’s goal of 550.

Council Member Kincaid raised the point that measuring only open cases does not reflect whether individuals ultimately secured employment. She asked whether a goal could also be set for closed cases with successful employment outcomes, as this better represents the end result clients are seeking.

Mr. Elez responded that while setting such a goal is possible, it is important to consider external limitations, particularly the budget constraints faced by regional centers that provide long-term support services. These limitations can delay or prevent case closures with positive employment outcomes, even when initial placement is successful.

Mr. Elez also cautioned that setting overly ambitious goals without sufficient funding could make it difficult to motivate staff and meet expectations. He emphasized that the SE program is funded at only \$300,000 annually, compared to the \$30 million general vocational rehabilitation (VR) grant. With budgetary limitations, a reasonably feasible number would need to be considered.

In light of these concerns, the council agreed to add a separate goal for closed supported employment cases with an employment outcome, establishing targets of 125 in Year 1 and 135 in Year 2.

Chair Mayes acknowledged the importance of tracking successful employment outcomes and agreed that progress on these new targets should be monitored over the next year to evaluate feasibility and determine if further adjustments are necessary.

Chair Mayes moved on to discuss Goal #5, which aims to increase participation of targeted disability groups in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. The goal outlines several strategic initiatives, including enhanced collaboration with Southern and Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services, rural mental health clinics, and private providers of mental and behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, and sensory-related services such as vision and audiology. Emphasis was placed on expanding the vendor base to include more practitioners in these areas and collaborating with various statewide and local organizations such as independent living centers, criminal justice entities, foster youth centers, and disability resource centers on higher education campuses.

Further strategies discussed include staff training on mental health, blindness and low vision, deafness and hard of hearing; increasing the use of telehealth, (particularly for mental health services in rural areas), utilizing social media for outreach on sensory disabilities; and developing long-term mental health support pathways. There was also discussion of strengthening relationships with the Deaf Commission, National Federation of the Blind, and other advocacy organizations, along with participation in relevant conferences and consortiums. Outreach to tribal partners and continued support for the state's only residential blind skills training program were also highlighted.

Council Member O'Neill emphasized updating language to use "blind and low vision" instead of "visually impaired" to align with current community preferences. She also suggested explicitly including assistive technology as a component of services for the blind and low vision population.

Council Member Kincaid questioned the intent and current relevance of the telehealth bullet and suggested reviewing the list to ensure terminology and groupings are up to date. It was clarified that telehealth refers primarily to mental health services for rural clients. She also pointed out formatting issues in the final bullet point, which will be corrected.

Additionally, Council Member O'Neill advocated for the inclusion of Braille literacy in the goal's strategies, citing national data linking Braille proficiency with higher employment outcomes among blind and low vision individuals.

Chair Mayes agreed to specify "Braille literacy skills" in the context of blind and low vision populations.

In reviewing the performance measurement data, it was noted that Goal 5 was established recently and still lacks specific targets. The Council discussed concerns about setting numerical goals for subgroups (mental health, blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing), as it might unintentionally shift focus away from the agency's overarching mission to serve all eligible individuals equitably. The group acknowledged the need to track data to monitor service equity without establishing targets that could lead to prioritization conflicts.

Chair Mayes initiated a conversation regarding the current goal of increasing service to specific populations, questioning whether the subcommittee should establish specific targets or continue with a tracking-only approach. He expressed a preference for ongoing data collection to inform future decisions, rather than setting targets prematurely.

Council Member Kincaid emphasized the importance of focusing on underserved populations and ensuring staff are properly trained to support them, particularly individuals who are blind or visually impaired. She acknowledged the risk of duplication but highlighted the value of measuring successful outcomes to improve services.

Council Member O'Neill agreed with Council Member Kincaid's sentiments and recalled the original purpose of the goal as being a data-tracking mechanism to support advocacy for marginalized groups. She also raised questions about current strategies and services for the Deaf and hard of hearing community, referencing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission and requesting future discussion for updates.

Laura Thompson, NSRC Council Member, confirmed that the commission is active and working in multiple areas but noted the need for more time and feedback regarding strategy alignment.

Ms. Childers proposed reclassifying the current goal as an "indicator" rather than a formal goal, as it primarily functions as a tracking mechanism. Further discussion led to a staff recommendation to include individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) as a new category in the tracking framework.

Chair Mayes and Council Member Kincaid both supported the inclusion, with Council Member Kincaid adding that tracking employment outcomes for groups like the blind/visually impaired, Deaf/hard of hearing, and those with IDD could serve as a powerful tool for educating employers and advocating for inclusive hiring practices.

Chair Mayes concluded that an additional tracking column would be added for IDD, and more input on the topic would be gathered in the future. He reiterated agreement with the notion of treating the measure more as an indicator.

Toward the end, he asked whether any additional goals should be added beyond the current five, suggesting a potential goal based on client satisfaction survey data.

Mr. Elez responded with a clarifying question about whether the goal would aim to address consumer survey findings.

Chair Mayes left the matter open for committee feedback, questioning if five goals were sufficient or if a sixth focused on service quality might be necessary. He noted that various quality issues had already been addressed through current planning efforts.

Ms. Merrill reminded the group that in addition to the five established goals, two indicators are also being tracked. These include: (1) average caseload size by bureau, and (2) the number of active participants in the 700h program as well as those who completed it and obtained competitive integrated employment. She clarified that these indicators are not tied to specific goals but are included to keep key metrics on the committee's radar.

Chair Mayes invited feedback on the indicators, and while no concerns were raised, he asked whether these items were intended for tracking only or if performance goals were being set.

Mr. Elez confirmed they were solely for tracking purposes.

Mr. Elez then provided an overview of the federal performance indicators the program is also held accountable for by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These include measurable skill gains, credential attainment, employment in the second and fourth quarters after exit, and median earnings. He explained that client cases are not immediately closed upon employment; clients must maintain employment for at least 90 days before case closure is considered, and typically, it takes longer. Federal indicators help determine program success over extended periods, such as six months and one-year post-exit, which RSA monitors closely.

Chair Mayes asked to conclude by confirming there were no further comments on this element and inquired of VR Administrator Elez whether a formal motion was needed.

Mr. Elez stated that a motion was required to approve the revised goals and strategies for federal fiscal years 2026 and 2027, including technical adjustments provided by the VR staff.

Council Member Gustafson made the motion to approve, and Council Member Kincaid seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, with none opposed or abstaining.

Chair Mayes reminded members that there would be an opportunity to review the document again at the upcoming full Rehabilitation Council meeting. He further asked that members double-check the portions they contributed to. The meeting was advanced to the next agenda item.

## **6. OUTLINE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM YEARS FFY2026 and FFY2027**

Throughout the discussion of Agenda Item Number 5, Chair Mayes and the Council ended up combining it with the discussion and possible action of Agenda Item Number 6. He requested a motion to be passed for the revised goals and strategies for federal fiscal years 2026 and 2027, including technical adjustments provided by the VR staff.

Council Member Gustafson made the motion to approve, and Council Member Kincaid seconded it. When the motion was passed there was no opposition or abstentions, allowing for a Unanimous vote. Chair Mayes proceeded to the next Agenda Item.

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Mayes opened the floor for public comment, reminding attendees that no action could be taken on public comments unless the subject had been properly added to the agenda in accordance with NRS 241.020. He noted that comments may be limited to three minutes due to time constraints and that in-person attendees in Las Vegas would be given priority, followed by callers on the public phone line.

In Las Vegas, Stephen Cohen provided a brief public comment on behalf of the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council, informing the subcommittee that the DD Council's input survey would close two weeks from the following day. He mentioned that he was awaiting the Spanish version and believed all other non-English versions were already posted on the DD Council's website, with plans to ensure the information would be sent to Jenny Richter for distribution. There were no additional public comments from the Las Vegas location, nor were there any from the Reno location or via the public phone line or chat.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to the close of the meeting, Chair Mayes shared a personal update, announcing that he had been slightly distracted during the session due to his daughter going into labor that morning and that he anticipated becoming a grandfather for the first time before midnight. Members warmly congratulated him. Following brief well-wishes from Kate Osti, NDALC, who joined remotely to offer

congratulations, Chair Mayes thanked everyone for their participation and once more reminded members that they would have another opportunity to review and provide feedback on the materials discussed today at the upcoming full Rehabilitation Council meeting in September.

The meeting was formally adjourned at 3:51 PM.

MEETING MINUTES SUBMITTED BY URIAH CARTER, AA II

EDITED BY: JENNY RICHTER LIVIA, NSRC LIAISON

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Jenny Richter, N.S.R.C. Liaison

**Approved By:**

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Jack Mayes, Subcommittee Chair