



**2007 Comprehensive Needs
Assessment for the Oregon
Office of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services:
Executive Summary to the
Final Report**

December 21, 2007

Submitted to:

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I. Introduction

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) is responsible for the operation of Oregon's general vocational rehabilitation program. OVRs hired Program and Policy Insight, LLC (PPI) to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment that will provide information and recommendations about the vocational rehabilitation needs of Oregonians with disabilities.

PPI worked with OVRs staff, as well as with members of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to develop a framework and activities related to the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The SRC is a Governor appointed body that serves as a policy partner with the public vocational rehabilitation program. The SRC has legislated responsibilities that include surveying customer satisfaction, developing an annual report, and participating in the development of the state plan.

OVRs has several ongoing initiatives, including the Competitive Employment Project, aimed to improve services for OVRs consumers. The Competitive Employment Project (CEP) developed a strategic plan, built on the input of a broad base of stakeholders, to increase the employment outcomes of individuals with the most significant disabilities. The results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment are expected to help formulate vocational rehabilitation policy, identify potential changes to services, and inform development of OVRs' 2009 State Plan for services and supports. Where appropriate, this report highlights findings that are similar to those found in other OVRs efforts, including the CEP, to improve outcomes for OVRs consumers.

In this Executive Summary, we first describe how we completed the needs assessment. We then highlight key findings related to OVRs consumers overall, selected groups of interest, and estimates of persons with disabilities. We then provide Key Recommendations based on Comprehensive Needs Assessment findings, related to both service provision and future needs assessments. More detailed information on findings and recommendations is included in the full report and appendices.

II. Methodology

The following key research questions guided the comprehensive needs assessment:

- Consumer Needs and Barriers: What are the primary barriers to employment for OVRs consumers, and what are their service needs?
- OVRs Service Provision: How can OVRs services best support positive employment outcomes for consumers?
- Target Population Estimates: What does the OVRs target population look like?

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment used multiple data sources, including a survey of current OVRs consumers, a web-based survey of OVRs staff, telephone interviews with other key stakeholders, and analysis of existing disability data and OVRs documents.

III. Barriers and Service Needs: Overall Population

This section provides key findings related to consumer barriers to employment and service needs for the overall consumer population.

- A majority of consumers identified two barriers to employment: “Not having enough job skills or the wrong kinds of skills” and “Not having enough education or training”. Most OVRs staff members believe that services to address these barriers are available, and most OVRs consumers who faced these barriers noted that they have received or are receiving OVRs services to address these barriers.
- Many consumers, most OVRs staff and most stakeholders identified employers’ negative perceptions about people with disabilities as a key barrier to employment. Interviews with employers suggest that OVRs does not have a strong relationship with employers, and that more outreach to employers, such as regular OVRs presentations at partner agencies and employer associations, could help develop these connections.
- The majority of all OVRs staff identified all possible items as barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, which suggests that OVRs staff work with a variety of consumers and are familiar with the types of barriers consumers face.
- “Disability-related transportation issues,” “Mental health issues,” and “Inadequate job-search skills” were cited as barriers by the greatest number of OVRs staff members. In contrast, these items were cited as barriers to employment by less than half of OVRs consumers.
- Consumer and staff responses indicate that some consumers face additional barriers to employment that require access to supportive programs beyond the responsibility of OVRs services. For example, in response to a question about the primary barrier to employment, “Other health issues” was the most frequent response, cited by just under one-quarter of consumers. Stakeholders also suggested that health issues and access to on-going medical treatment can be a major barrier for some consumers.
- For all items related to accessibility challenges, the majority of OVRs consumers indicated that they have not experienced challenges to accessing OVRs services. However, small groups of OVRs consumers (fewer than one-quarter of consumers), as well as staff, noted challenges related to completing the OVRs application and Individualized Employment Plan. OVRs may need to provide additional outreach and assistance in completing these forms.
- The majority of OVRs staff indicated that vendors are able to meet OVRs consumer vocational rehabilitation needs.
- Various stakeholder groups and staff noted limited follow-up services available through OVRs and noted a need for longer-term, frequent post-placement follow-up; this may be achieved through stronger partnerships with agencies that can provide these services.
- In response to a request for suggested changes, the largest group of consumer responses (more than one-third of consumers) indicated that no changes to OVRs service provision were needed.
- Findings related to the barriers and service needs for the overall population were aligned with selected key issue areas and values in Competitive Employment Project documents.

IV. Barriers and Service Needs: Selected Target Populations

This section provides key findings related to consumer barriers to employment and service needs for selected target populations, including:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Individuals from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds
- Youth in transition from high schools

Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities

- OVRs consumers with the most significant disabilities identified similar barriers to employment as OVRs consumers overall. Barriers cited by the largest number of consumers with the most significant disabilities included “Not enough, or the wrong kinds, of job skills”, “Not enough education or training”, and employer perception about working with individuals with disabilities.
- OVRs consumers with significant disabilities were more likely than other OVRs consumers to identify “Disability-related personal care” and “Housing issues” as barriers to employment. However, each of these barriers was identified by less than one-third of consumers with the most significant disabilities. Responses for other barrier-related items were similar to responses from other OVRs consumers.
- Similar to the overall population, a majority of OVRs staff identified “Mental health issues” as a top barrier for this group. Less than half of consumer respondents with the most significant disabilities identified this issue as a barrier.
- Relevant stakeholder groups suggested that although the general barriers to employment are similar for people with significant disabilities, individuals from the group might face more barriers to employment and/or their disabilities might be more severe and the resulting barriers harder to overcome. Consumers with significant disabilities may require more innovative job development and training approaches to obtain employment, and OVRs may need to discuss working with persons with significant disabilities, in specific, when promoting OVRs services to employers.
- Similar to the overall population, no item related to accessibility challenges was cited by more than one-quarter of individuals with most significant disability, which suggests that OVRs is addressing potential accessibility challenges for this group.
- Individuals with the most significant disabilities were significantly more likely to cite “Completing the IEP” as a barrier to employment than other consumers. However, less than one-quarter of consumers with the most significant disabilities cited this item as a challenge to accessibility.
- Findings related to the barriers and service needs for individuals with the most significant disabilities were aligned with selected key issue areas and values in Competitive Employment Project documents.

Racial/Ethnic Minorities

- Similar to OVRs consumers overall, the top two barriers to employment, each cited by the most OVRs racial/ethnic minority consumers, were related to not having enough or the wrong kinds of job skills, and not have enough education or training.
- In comparison with non-minority consumers, only one barrier shows a significant difference between these two groups. “Language issue” was noted as a barrier by more minority consumer than non-minority consumers. While this item was cited by less than one-third of minority consumers, most OVRs staff indicated that language barriers are a primary barrier to accessing or receiving OVRs for minority consumers. In addition, several stakeholders across groups indicated that hearing impaired consumers are a cultural minority that may face similar language barriers to employment or services.
- Similar to the overall population, all items representing challenges to accessibility were noted by less than one-third of the minority consumer population, suggesting that OVRs has addressed many potential challenges to accessibility.
- Stakeholders noted that cultural differences regarding disabilities, work expectations and trust of service agencies have not been fully explored by OVRs. These findings suggest a need for targeted training across OVRs staff to increase cultural literacy and awareness.
- Findings related to the barriers and service needs for racial/ethnic minorities were aligned with one of the key issue areas identified by Competitive Employment Project documents.

Youth in Transition

- The top two barriers (cited by the largest percentage of youth consumers), “Not enough jobs available” and “Other transportation issues” differ from those cited by the overall population. The third ranked barrier, “Not enough or wrong kinds of job skills” reflects key barriers suggested by the overall population. Each of these barriers was cited by less than half of youth consumers.
- For almost half of the barrier-related items, youth consumers were significantly less likely to identify the item as a barrier to employment than were non-youth consumers.
- OVRs staff identified skill- and education-related barriers as the primary barriers to employment for youth. Less than one-third of youth consumers identified these barriers. This result may reflect a larger pattern of fewer youth consumers identifying barriers to employment. However, it may also stem from youth’s lack of experience with workplace expectations, or counselor limitations in identifying non-traditional workplace skills.
- Although “Other transportation issues” was one of the top barriers to employment cited by youth, less than one-quarter of staff members identified this issue as a top barrier for youth consumers. Several OVRs administration and SRC stakeholders noted that transportation is a particular challenge for youth who may not have access to their own vehicles and may instead rely on limited or non-existent public transportation systems, suggesting that youth transition programs may need to focus additional efforts on assisting youth to identify transportation options or otherwise accessible employment opportunities.
- Similar to the overall population, all items representing challenges to accessibility were noted by less than one-third of the youth consumer population, suggesting that OVRs has

addressed many potential challenges to accessibility. Despite findings regarding transportation as a perceived barrier to employment, very few youth cited public transportation as a challenge to accessing services.

- Stakeholder respondents suggested that the education system and the vocational rehabilitation system are not well aligned, resulting in inadequate coordination of resources between the systems, a lack of awareness about available OVRs services and insufficient coordination of youth transition services and opportunities. Stakeholders suggested joint decision making about resource planning and responsibility, and improved outreach to education agencies to coordinate services across agencies.
- Findings related to the barriers and service needs for youth were aligned with one of the key issue areas identified by the Competitive Employment Project.

V. Other Supports for Effective Service Provision

This section describes key findings related to other supports for effective service provision.

- Several stakeholders noted that in general, OVRs partners well, and that partnerships are extremely important given the relatively small size of OVRs staff. They also noted the strength and effectiveness of local partnerships, but that collaboration across state-level partner agencies could be improved. Stakeholders suggested written agreements, formal communication plans, and greater joint representation on task forces as strategies to enhance partnerships.
- A majority of employers, stakeholder respondents, OVRs consumers, and OVRs staff agreed that greater employer and public education about the abilities of people with disabilities is critical to creating job opportunities and career ladders. Employer stakeholders in particular encouraged more aggressive outreach to increase employer engagement and participation.
- Although most stakeholders felt that OVRs has done a relatively good job in providing continuing education opportunities for staff, they identified several areas for improvement:
 - OVRs staff members in rural areas without higher education institutions may benefit from distance learning opportunities
 - All OVRs staff could benefit from more training on specific service models or strategies, including the supported employment model, person-centered counseling, and communication related to mental health and substance abuse
 - All staff could benefit from disability-specific training, such as developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and non-physical asset needs.
- Multiple stakeholders expressed very little or no connection with OVRs and felt unable to comment on many of the survey's questions. In particular, stakeholder responses suggest that OVRs has an opportunity to develop stronger partnerships with groups representing minorities, and devote additional resources, in collaboration with workforce partners, towards employer-education efforts on OVRs services and persons with disabilities.
- Findings related to other supports for effective service provision were aligned with values articulated by the Competitive Employment Project.

VI. Target Population Estimates

This section describes the OVRs estimated target consumer population for the state of Oregon, OVRs branch office service areas and selected target populations, and provides estimates related to the percentage of various target consumer populations served by OVRs.¹

State of Oregon

- Analysis of these data suggests that the percentage of Oregonians aged 16 to 64 who experience an Employment Disability may range from 8% to 17%. The employment gap, or the difference between the employment rates for persons with and without an Employment Disability, may range from 49% to 54%.
- Analysis of 2006 OPS and 2006 ACS data (Employment Disability measures) suggest that the target OVRs consumer population² may be as large as 110,000.
- Comparison of the numbers served by OVRs and target population estimates indicates that OVRs is serving approximately 17% of the target consumer population.

OVRs Service Areas

- Analysis of 2006 OPS data (Employment Disability measure) indicates that the percentage of Oregonians aged 16 to 64 who experience an Employment Disability varies considerably among branch office service areas, from a low of approximately 3% to a high of about 37%. The employment gap also varies among service areas, from a low of approximately 36% to a high of about 71%.
- Analysis of these data suggests that the OVRs target population for various branch office service areas may vary substantially, from a low of approximately 6,000 to a high of about 28,000.

Selected Target Populations

- Analysis of 2006 ACS data (Any Disability measure) indicates that the racial/ethnic minority target population is small, with estimates indicating that all racial/ethnic minority groups (i.e., Black, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, and Hispanic) constitute fewer than 6,000. Hispanics represent the largest group with more than 5,700 individuals and Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders represent the smaller group with fewer than 100 individuals. For comparison, Whites represent the largest group of consumers, with more than 100,000 estimated consumers.

¹ Primary sources of data for these estimates included: 2006 Oregon Population Survey (OPS) data and 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) data¹. The 2006 SRC Annual Report served as the source of information about consumer served by OVRs. Other selected sources of information, including Oregon Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, were used to develop estimates for selected target populations. The OPS and ACS may be useful in the future as sources of data for trends and comparisons.

² For the purpose of these analyses, the target population was estimated as the number of individuals with an Employment Disability who would need to become employed in order for individuals with disabilities to show the same employment rate as individuals without an Employment Disability.

- Comparison of target population estimates with consumers served by OVRs indicates that most racial/ethnic minority groups receive services equitably in comparison with non-minorities (i.e., Whites). Black, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, and Hispanic consumers are all served in larger proportions than Whites, with Hispanics served in the largest percentage (over 50% of the target population served by OVRs). However, Asians may be underserved in comparison with Whites and other racial/ethnic minority groups, with only 10% of the Asian target consumer population served by OVRs.
- Analysis of 2006 ACS data (Any Disability measure) suggests that the OVRs target youth population amounts to just under 50,000. Comparison of this estimate with numbers served indicates that OVRs is probably serving as much as 6% of the target population.
- Target population estimates for various other prospective OVRs consumer groups include: approximately 2,500 youth in transition who experience autism spectrum disorder; approximately 675 consumers who experienced a recent traumatic brain injury; and less than 55,000 consumers who experience a mental disability. The extent to which these estimates incorporate employment information varies by disability impairment.

VII. Key Recommendations

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment offers a rich source of information on the barriers and service needs of OVRs consumers from the perspective of consumers, staff members, and program stakeholders. This section provides recommendations to inform future service delivery, and is organized according to key report sections.

Most of these recommendations can be addressed through multiple short- and long-term action steps. However, those recommendations that will require substantial investment of resources (e.g., additional staff members) or systems change (e.g., development and coordination of multiple partnerships and systems) are more likely to be effectively addressed via comprehensive long-term strategies.

Barriers and Service Provision: Overall OVRs Consumers

Continue to focus on connecting consumers with opportunities to improve job skills and obtain education/training. A majority of consumers noted insufficient or inadequate job skills and education/training as barriers to achieving employment goals. OVRs services are clearly aligned with these barriers, as the majority of consumers with those barriers noted that they are receiving helpful services to address the barriers. A majority of OVRs staff also indicated that job search and education services are readily available. OVRs should continue its focus on assisting consumers to address these barriers.

Increase employer and public education on the abilities of people with disabilities. The majority of employers, stakeholder respondents across groups, OVRs consumers, and OVRs staff agreed that greater employer and public education on the abilities of people with disabilities is critical to creating job opportunities and career ladders. Stakeholder respondents noted the need for proactive OVRs marketing and communication strategies, such as regular and sustained

OVRs presentations at partner agencies and employer associations. Employer stakeholders also encouraged more aggressive outreach to increase employer engagement and participation.

Increase provision of or access to sustained follow-up services. Both stakeholders across groups and staff members noted a need for more sustained post-placement follow-up. Although long-term follow-up may be outside of OVRs responsibility, OVRs may wish to enhance greater connection with programs that can provide long-term support.

Continue efforts to maintain the accessibility and availability of OVRs services. For the overall population, all challenges to accessibility were cited by less than one-quarter of consumer respondents. Although there may be localized areas where vendor services are insufficient, OVRs efforts to make services accessible to OVRs consumers have generally been successful. OVRs should continue to improve service access and vendor availability in target areas.

Improve efforts to ensure connections to other supportive services. For a broad range of supportive services, a majority of consumers (who are receiving or have received services from OVRs) cited that services received have not helped them address that barrier. Access to supportive programs beyond the responsibility of OVRs services depends in large part on the existing capacity of related service providers. Where supportive services are available, OVRs should continue to develop connections with supportive service agencies to improve access to these services.

Barriers and Service Provision: Selected OVRs Target Populations

Persons with Most Significant Disabilities

Include targeted information about working with persons with significant disabilities during employer outreach. In addition to a general need for greater public and employer outreach and education, stakeholders working with people with significant disabilities also suggest a specific need to discuss abilities of and accommodations for these consumers when promoting OVRs services to employers. In particular, stakeholder feedback stressed the need for OVRs staff to facilitate non-physical accommodations, such as flexible scheduling and frequent breaks, especially for individuals with specific disabilities.

Continue implementation of model programs to serve consumers with significant disabilities, including Supported Employment and/or Return-to-Work programs. Compared to individuals with disabilities overall, OVRs administration, SRC members, and stakeholders working with individuals with significant disabilities indicated that these consumers may require more innovative job development, training approaches, and follow-up services to obtain and maintain employment. Stakeholders familiar with the needs of this group recommended continued implementation of Supported Employment and Return-to-Work programs, as well as person-centered planning, to help individuals with the most significant disabilities achieve their employment goals.

Racial, Ethnic, or Cultural Minority Consumers

Provide culturally responsive services. OVRS administration, SRC members, and stakeholders familiar with minority consumers indicated that OVRS service provision may not sufficiently implement cultural sensitivity and awareness when working with persons of racial, ethnic, or cultural minorities. These stakeholders suggested that OVRS should more fully explore cultural differences regarding disabilities, work expectations, and distrust of service agencies; these differences may significantly affect consumers' motivation to seek services or employment. These findings suggest a need for targeted training across OVRS staff to increase cultural literacy and awareness.

Ensure access to language-appropriate services for ethnic and cultural minorities. Needs assessment findings suggest that there is a group of minority consumers who face language barriers that are not adequately addressed by OVRS services. In addition to ethnic minorities, several administration and SRC stakeholders indicated that hearing-impaired consumers comprise a cultural minority that may face comparable language barriers to employment or services. These language barriers suggest a need for targeted training or partnerships to increase access to non-English or non-spoken language OVRS services, and for some consumers, a need for better access to targeted English language training programs.

Youth in Transition

Continue to build stronger skill-building programs for youth. Consumer survey results revealed that all barriers to employment are cited by less than half of youth respondents. For multiple items, including insufficient job skills and insufficient/inadequate education, youth were significantly less likely to cite items as a barrier than non-youth respondents. This finding may simply reflect a larger pattern of fewer youth consumers identifying barriers to employment, as evidenced across barriers. However, this discrepancy may also stem from youth's lack of experience with realistic workplace expectations, or counselor limitations in identifying non-traditional workplace skills and employer demand. More programmatic efforts to connect youth in transition to skill-building programs and education/training opportunities may be appropriate.

Identify additional opportunities to help youth overcome barriers related to other transportation issues. Youth consumers identified other transportation issues (i.e., non-disability related transportation issues) as one of the primary barriers to achieving their employment goals. However, less than one-quarter of staff members identified this issue as a key barrier for youth consumers. Several stakeholders noted that transportation is a particular challenge for youth who may not have access to their own vehicles and may instead rely on limited or non-existent public transportation systems, suggesting that youth transition programs may need to focus additional efforts on assisting youth to identify transportation options or otherwise accessible employment opportunities.

Multiple Selected Target Populations

Apply recommendations from the overall population to selected target populations, remaining sensitive to potential differences. Findings for the overall populations resulting from the consumer and staff surveys were generally aligned with the findings for selected target populations, especially individuals with the most significant disabilities and racial/ethnic minorities, suggesting that selected recommendations for the overall population were applicable to selected target populations.

Other Strategies to Support Effective Service Provision

Strengthen overall collaboration with all program partners. Although several stakeholders noted that OVRS partners well, other partnership feedback was varied. Effective collaboration with partner agencies is critical to OVRS success, and OVRS administration, SRC members, and allied program representatives suggested specific strategies for improvement, including formalized written agreements, institutionalized communication plans, greater joint representation on boards and task forces, and OVRS liaisons dedicated to specific agencies or specialized disabilities to streamline communication between partners.

Enhance partnerships with supportive service providers. Staff and consumer respondents indicated that select support services (e.g., substance abuse, mental health, medical treatment, and housing) are not readily available. Although access to these services depends on the local capacity of supportive service providers, consumer and staff feedback suggests a need for enhanced partnerships with these agencies, where available, to ensure that OVRS consumers are aware of and access available support.

Improve partnerships with education agencies at the state and local level. OVRS administration, SRC members, and education-affiliated stakeholders described systemic differences between the education and vocational rehabilitation systems. They noted variance in eligibility criteria, lack of awareness of available services across agencies, and lack of proactive planning to transition youth from the structured school environment into the workforce or post-secondary pursuits. Stakeholders suggested joint policy guidance regarding resource planning and responsibility and improved outreach to education agencies to coordinate services across agencies.

Deepen partnerships with selected stakeholder groups. Multiple stakeholders, including racial and minority representatives and employers, expressed very little or no connection with OVRS and felt unable to comment on many of the survey's questions. OVRS should develop stronger partnerships with groups representing minorities, and devote additional resources, in collaboration with workforce partners, towards employer-education efforts on OVRS services and persons with disabilities. Deepening relationships with local workforce partners and other employer representation agencies could facilitate employer engagement.

Increase staff training in targeted areas. Most stakeholders felt that OVRS is relatively successful with continuing education opportunities for staff, but identified several areas for improvement, including access to distance education for rural OVRS staff, enhanced training on

specific models or strategies (such as supported employment model, person-centered counseling, and communication related to mental health and substance abuse) and targeted training on specific disabilities (such as developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury).

Support staff efforts to conduct job development and build employer relationships. A majority of OVRs staff members indicated that more time for job development services is an important consumer-focused change. Stakeholder and employer feedback also indicated a need for improved training to help staff identify and develop jobs that are appropriate for consumers' abilities and interests. It should be noted, however, that several staff provided strong feedback in the survey suggesting that job development should not be considered one of their job duties. It may be appropriate for OVRs to provide opportunities for self-selected staff to receive additional training related to job development and building employer relationships, or forge stronger connections with existing workforce development partners; these staff could serve as a resource to other OVRs counselors.

Continue to support activities related to key issue areas and values articulated by Competitive Employment Project. Many of the key findings and related recommendations stemming from this Comprehensive Needs Assessment are aligned with priority issue areas and values identified in the Competitive Employment Outcomes Strategic Plan, suggesting that continued support for these activities would be appropriate.

Target Population Estimates

Continue to explore potential need for additional staffing and branch office locations in regions with larger employment gaps and/or employment population estimates. The percent of the population affected by an employment disability, and the related employment rates for these groups, varies considerably by branch office. These data provide important information on the overall distribution of the OVRs target population that should be considered in future staff allocation or resource distribution. It would also be appropriate to explore additional factors that may affect the employment gap experienced by selected branch office service areas and work with partner agencies to address those gaps.

Consider using a range of estimates for funding requests and/or staffing allocations, and continue to pursue sources of data related to disability severity. The analyses conducted during this Needs Assessment confirmed that target population estimates vary substantially by data source and disability measure. It would be appropriate for OVRs to base estimates for funding requests or staffing allocations on a range of estimates, and continue to pursue additional estimates related to disability severity.

Identify and address barriers to employment faced by African-Americans/Blacks. Target population estimates suggest that African-Americans/Black individuals with disabilities in Oregon face a larger employment gap than other racial/ethnic minority groups. Efforts should be made to target improvements in employment outcomes for persons with disabilities who are African-Americans/Black, potentially by targeting OVRs services, providing additional resources to branch offices who serve large numbers of African-American/Black individuals, and/or educating staff about the challenges faced by this group.

Continue to focus efforts on serving racial/ethnic minority and non-minority consumers equitably. Examination of the percent of various racial/ethnic minority groups served by OVRs suggests that OVRs has made adequate efforts to ensure that most racial/ethnic minority groups receive services equitably in comparison with non-minorities (i.e., Whites). However, the results of these analyses also indicate that Asians may be underserved in comparison with other racial/ethnic minority groups and in comparison with non-minorities.

Consider using OPS and ACS employment disability measures in future analyses. Target population estimates were highest for the OPS employment disability measure and OPS data can be aggregated by branch office service area. If resources permit, it would be useful to examine changes in the employment disability measure over time. It might also be useful to use national and state-level statistics for the ACS employment disability measure as benchmarks for relative progress in Oregon.

Future OVRs Needs Assessments

Allow for more upfront planning activities. The expedited timeframe of the Current Needs Assessment required the various assessment activities (consumer survey, staff survey, and stakeholder interviews) to be conducted simultaneously. With a longer timeframe, exploratory discussions with stakeholders at the start of the project could inform, refine, and improve data collection instruments and processes.

Facilitate greater employer input. This assessment incorporated important feedback from multiple employer stakeholders; however, multiple employer respondents were either unavailable or expressed a concern that they were unfamiliar with OVRs and the needs of persons with disabilities. In future needs assessments, it may be useful to request that relevant OVRs partners, such as job development organizations or Workforce Investment Boards, provide recommendations for employer respondents to increase the likelihood of gathering substantive feedback from employers.

Consider additional outcomes-related evaluation efforts that relate selected services to employment outcomes. The perceptions measured in this assessment provide critical information about needs, gaps, and targeted improvements. However, the design of the assessment did not provide information on the outcomes achieved by OVRs consumers, nor did it associate consumer outcomes with services received. It would be appropriate for OVRs to consider implementing an interim evaluation related to the effectiveness of OVRs services as measured by consumer outcomes. Focusing evaluation activities on specific programmatic efforts would be an efficient use of resources, and has greater potential of yielding more rigorous design and results.