### a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

##### 1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council’s functions;

The MCB RC has made the following recommendations for FFY 2021 on VR services

* + Make budget recommendations and advocate, when appropriate, to ensure that MCB both receives sufficient VR funding and provides appropriate and cost-effective services for consumers;

Ensure that MCB’s social services and vocational rehabilitation staff can fully participate in IEP meetings for children and youth;

* + Enhance the service delivery of MCB VR counselors to increase job development activities, job placement services, technology services, job retention, and job coaching services to all individuals (including individuals with other disabilities in addition to blindness) receiving vocational services at MCB regional offices;
	+ Work with committee chairs to grow and increase the productivity of RC committees;
	+ Work and advocate for accessibility of state and local government portal systems, including all applications for services and all documents posted on these portals; and
	+ Continue to work with state officials to support the Commonwealth’s initiative to move forward as a model employer.

For some time, the MCB RC has been concerned that the availability and quality of braille instruction provided by school systems to elementary through high school age children can vary in quality and frequency from town to town. The MCB RC supports the agency’s decision to take the lead in revitalizing the Braille Literacy Council. The MCB RC has made no specific recommendations during the past year to the agency on this issue.

The MCB RC is concerned about the increasing difficulty that blind job seekers have in filling out inaccessible company applications. The agency does have employment specialists as well as VR counselors who can help consumers but does agree that this is a major issue and that advocacy from consumer groups and collaboration is very important for the long term in making these websites more accessible. The MCB RC has made no specific recommendations during the past year to the agency on this issue.

MCB and the MCB RC are concerned that vending stands in Massachusetts have been on the decline. MCB continues to explore other opportunities away from the food industry in an attempt to diversify the program. A partnership was established with the Lottery Commission where MCB was involved in the testing of new lottery machines for accessibility. The machines have been purchased and are working well for blind vendors. In addition, the MCB Commissioner has reached out to the Massachusetts Trial Court in an effort to establish new vending stands in the courts. The MCB RC has made no additional recommendations during the past year to the agency on this issue.

MCB RC members remain very interested in the effects of MCB’s usage of Section 257 (State statute) to evaluate the purchase pricing of services through community providers. The intent of the law is to simplify pricing and make it more efficient. MCB has explained that this rate restructuring will benefit consumers heavily impacted by older and more complicated pricing, including the deaf-blind and multiply-impaired populations. Most vendors are happy with the newer simpler Section 257 rates. The rate increase assures access to more providers for MCB consumers.

MCB RC has continued to review the consumer satisfaction studies conducted. The Council had in previous years provided input into the design of these studies as well as the design of the comprehensive needs assessment study. The MCB RC worked with the agency on the development and implementation of the 2018 comprehensive needs assessment methodology in line with the requirements and focus of WIOA on competitive integrated employment. One focus group was held and a web-based survey was developed and conducted.

The RC had previously expressed concerns that Survey Monkey is not secure so Google Forms was used. While Google Forms is minimally accessible, in practice it proved to not be user-friendly for blind consumers. The RC and MCB will re-think and re-evaluate future use of web-based surveys. MCB will work with closely with the RC and a sub-committee on needs assessment to plan future needs assessment methodology. Recently, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) engaged a consultant to develop an MCB survey of its consumers to support MCB’s efforts to better ascertain the data dynamics of people with blindness throughout the Commonwealth.  The goal of this innovative program is to enhance its development and targeting of future programming and to contribute to its comprehensive needs assessment.  The consultant developed a short survey to be asked during the intake process.  The consultant developed a much larger panel of questions that could be used in the survey of existing clients.   Now MCB is looking to progress to the next stage which will be implementing the surveys. MCB has issued an RFR to seek a consultant to provide guidance via a report and to implement the long survey that will go to existing consumers and provide analytics on the data collected.  Representatives of the RC will provide feedback and advice throughout this process.

The MCB RC has had a long-term interest in transportation accessibility and its impact on the ability of consumers to pursue vocational objectives. The director of MCB’s Mobility Unit attends a number of meetings on regional and statewide transportation issues to keep the agency informed on issues relevant to transportation accessibility. MCB and the RC are closely following new transportation options such as UBER, Lyft etc. A number of blind persons who are proficient with technology have benefitted from these services. While the MCB RC believes that lack of transportation is a major barrier to consumers’ ability to participate in VR services and to obtain employment, it has made no specific recommendations during the past year to the agency on this issue.

The MCB RC continues to pay close attention to the agency’s implementation of the Work Force Innovation and Opportunity Act. MCB provides updates on the effort at each meeting. The agency and the council have continued to refine goals and priorities and plans for innovation and expansion based on the new law. MCB and the Rehabilitation Council are in full support of the Workforce Development Plan Vision that all Massachusetts residents will benefit from a seamless system of education and workforce services that supports career pathways for individuals and leads to a more informed, educated, and skilled workforce, which meets the Commonwealth’s business demands and sustains a thriving economy.

The agency and the council are committed to the following paths to the realization of that vision:

* Work with Core Program partners to promote Career Pathways for individuals who are legally blind and to improve the one-stop delivery system.
* Strengthen the alignment of the MCB VR program with the other core programs of the workforce development system.
* Use state and regional labor market information analysis to develop more employment options for consumers who are legally blind, utilizing regional labor market data, regional economic development agencies, and business intelligence gathered from interactions with core partners.
* Participate in the development of a coordinated, streamlined regional strategy for business partner outreach and follow up.

WIOA and its state plan requirements have been discussed at each quarterly meeting of the Rehabilitation Council since its enactment.

The agency’s performance on RSA standards and indicators over previous years has at all times met the minimum level of overall performance established by RSA.

Some agency-specific results for FFY 2019 are:

* + Percentage of MCB consumers who exited with employment was 57.6%.
	+ Average hourly earnings for competitive employment outcomes for MCB was $22.86.
	+ Average number of hours worked per week for competitive employment outcomes was 31.16 hours.
	+ Cost per participant served in Career Services: $159.84
	+ Cost per participant served in Training Services: $4,206.05
	+ Ratio of Minority Service Rate to Non-Minority Service Rate: .911.

The MCB RC has made no specific recommendations during the year on VR performance evaluations. It did make recommendations and participate as a partner in the development of the plan goals. All of the MCB RC recommendations on plan goals have been adopted and are included in this plan.

The Rehabilitation Council submits an annual report to the Governor of Massachusetts and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

### 2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council’s input and recommendations; and

The MCB RC has made no specific recommendations during the past year on VR services and performance evaluations. It did make recommendations and participate as a partner in the development of the plan goals. All of the MCB RC recommendations on plan goals were jointly developed, agreed to, and adopted and are included in this plan (Section l. State Goals and Priorities).

### 3. the designated State unit’s explanations for rejecting any of the Council’s input or recommendations.

No input or recommendations were rejected.