

APPROACH [Maximum Points: 45]

This section of the application describes a five-year plan by outlining goals, objectives, activities, and timelines. It also provides details about how the CDD will carry out each of the four core functions in ways that meet the requirements set forth in the federal Program Announcement.

Descriptions of A Five-Year Plan (3 points)

To meet the purpose of the DD Act, the CDD utilized a comprehensive and need-oriented approach in identifying measurable and attainable goals, objectives, and activities for the five-year plan, which was also based on the CDD mission, the AUCD Strategic Map, and the needs of Texans with developmental disabilities and their families. The mission of the CDD is to support the self-determination, community integration, and quality of life of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The AUCD Strategic Map addresses visibility and reach; impact on policy, practice, and research; network engagement and collaboration; diverse and sustainable funding; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The needs of the state, the CDD mission, and the five aspects of AUCD Strategic Map will be implemented through a five-year action plan, which is summarized in **Table 2, Appendix B**. The plan are organized around four overarching goals which correspond to the four core functions: **Goal 1:** Provide pre-service training and continuing education that promotes inclusive, quality education and community settings for people with disabilities; **Goal 2:** Provide training and technical assistance, and services and support, to individuals with disabilities, family members, and professionals on a variety of topics that promote inclusive, quality education and community settings; **Goal 3:** Conduct research and evaluation studies that advance the knowledge base, contribute to improved evidence-based practices, and effect meaningful change in educational and community quality of life outcomes

for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families; and **Goal 4:** Develop and maintain a broad array of information dissemination strategies to ensure the CDD (a) responds to the information needs of self-advocates, family members, and professionals and (b) becomes a state, national, and international resource in the emphasis areas targeted by the CDD. The five-year plan addresses two emphasis areas: *Education and Early Intervention* and *Community Quality of Life*. As required in the Program Announcement, **Table 2, Appendix B** includes measurable and attainable goals, objectives, activities, target dates for accomplishment (projected on a quarterly basis), roles and involvement of partners and collaborators, and quantitative projections of the accomplishments to be achieved. More information about these objectives are provided in the following sections where the four core functions are described.

Goals, Objectives, and Activities Reflect Interagency Collaboration (1 point)

The CDD goals, objectives, and activities were identified based on input from multiple groups and agencies, including self-advocates, family members, representatives from state parent training organizations, state agencies, and representatives from the state's DD partners. A number of these goals, objectives, and activities will also be carried out by partnering with multiple agencies. For example, The CDD will collaborate with the Center for Disability Studies (University of Texas UCEDD) to provide person centered training (Objective 2.4) and to develop the Academy for Direct Support Professionals (Objective 2.5). The CDD will partner with the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCIL) to provide direct training and support to individuals with disabilities and their families (Objective 2.7). Many other objectives and activities reflect collaborations with multiple agencies, including state agencies, non-for-profit agencies, school districts, and parent organizations. The CDD will work with these partners to strategically effect systemic change in the State and local communities and service systems.

The CDD Plan Complements and Furthers Plans of DD Partners (1 point)

The five-year plan for the CDD complements and furthers the State DD Council five-year plan, the P&A Statement of Goals and Priorities, and the five-year plan for the other UCEDD in the State. The Texas DD Network partners – Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Texas, Texas Center for Disability Studies, and the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University – meet semiannually to identify and discuss issues of common concern and to identify and discuss possible responses by the individual partners and the network as a whole. These dedicated collaboration meetings are in addition to each partner’s respective advisory committee meetings. The DD Network partners also have representation on each partner’s advisory committee, and the input of the Network partners is also obtained through these advisory committee meetings. Collectively, all DD Network partners are involved in and collaborating on (a) the stakeholder advisory group for the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement regarding conditions in the state’s 13 large supported living centers, (b) the development of policy position papers that are developed prior to each legislative session and testimony provided to state legislators, and (c) the development and dissemination of materials and resources available from and through each partner. The five-year action plan was developed within this overall framework of joint meetings and collaborative planning. Each partner’s respective plans were reviewed within this framework to ensure the five-year plan complemented the work of the DD Network partners. It was through this review and discussion process that several objectives involve collaborative work with one or more of the DD Network partners. Please refer to **Appendix A** for a letter of support jointly written by the DD partners, which further indicates the strength of our partnership.

Leverage of Additional Public and Private Funds (2 points)

The CDD's UCEDD core grant is used to support an infrastructure for leveraging additional funds. In the past four years, the CDD leveraged an average of 11 projects and 4.1 million dollars per year. This translates to about \$7 leveraged fund per core grant dollar. In the next five years, the CDD will continue its effort and success in leveraging public and private funds. The projects included in the five-year plan will be funded by federal, state, local, and private funds. For example, Objectives 1.2 & 1.3 will be funded by the Office of Special Education, Objectives 3.1 & 3.2 will be funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, Objective 1.5 will be funded by state agencies, and Objective 1.8 will be funded by private sources. The CDD will maintain and expand its current partners for continued and increased leverage of funds from other sources. To do so, the CDD will provide incentives for faculty members of various disciplines to affiliate with the CDD and for entities to collaborate with the CDD. Through these collaborations, the CDD can leverage more funds to produce broader impact. Some incentives will include assistance with designing materials, maintenance of websites, and data analyses. Another approach will be through doctoral level interdisciplinary trainees who will act as liaisons between the CDD and their advisors and disciplines for collaborations. With these efforts, the CDD will maintain or exceed the current leverage rate of \$7 per core grant dollar.

Description on How to Carry out Pre-service Preparation (3 points)

This portion of the application describes how the CDD will carry out Interdisciplinary Pre-serve Preparation core function. As can be seen in **Appendix B**, this core function will be accomplished through five major objectives. The CDD will partner with the Special Education Program to offer a master's program in Special Education that provides students with specialized expertise in serving the inclusive education and transition needs of students with intellectual and DD (Obj. 1.1). This is a new objective that will begin in fall 2015 and several CDD affiliated

faculty will teach courses in the program, which is funded by tuitions and fees collected from students. An estimated 125 students will receive a master's degree and specialized knowledge in inclusive education strategies across the five years of the grant (2015-2020).

The CDD will continue to partner with faculty of special education to provide 6 doctoral students with expertise in autism to assume leadership positions as higher education faculty or researcher (Obj. 1.2). This objective is currently part of the CDD and is led by two CDD affiliated faculty who serve as co-principal investigators of a leadership training grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Along the same line of providing doctoral training, the CDD will partnership with a faculty of the Special Education Program to prepare 6 doctoral students with expertise in academic and behavioral support to assume leadership positions in higher education (Obj. 1.3). This will be a new objective that will start in fall 2015. It is supported by a leadership grant from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, to increase number of long-term trainees who will take leadership positions at 1, 5, and 10 years after completion of training, the CDD will add new Objective 1.4 in fall 2015 to provide education, training, and research experiences to doctoral level interdisciplinary trainees. These long-term trainees will come from various disciplines and learn how to conduct training and research from interdisciplinary perspectives. A total of 6 doctoral students will be trained in five years.

In response to the need for young adults with DD to attend postsecondary education and the need to prepare them for a career, the CDD will continue the Postsecondary Access and Training in Human Services (PATHS) project, which is an inclusive and career-focused postsecondary education program (Obj. 1.5). PATHS students receive one-semester of classroom instruction and one-semester of paid practicum. Graduates of PATHS receive a certificate and are supported to obtain employment as direct support professionals.

As described above and in **Appendix B**, the CDD pre-service training programs will:

- *Integrate knowledge and methods from two or more distinct disciplines.* CDD affiliated faculty will utilize and integrate methods and analytical frameworks from more than one disciplines to examine themes, issues, questions or topics in their teaching. The Master's and doctoral degree programs include courses from multiple disciplines. Courses will be taught by faculty with backgrounds from multiple disciplines, including special education, educational psychology, assessment, and multicultural education. Students will be trained to think and teach from a multiple disciplinary perspective and learn the notions and guiding principles from multiple disciplines to systematically form a more complete and coherent framework of analysis that offers a richer understanding of the issue under examination.
- *Integrate direct contributions to the field made by people with disabilities and family members.* People with disabilities and families have made and will continue to make contributions to all CDD training objectives. For example, the PATHS program (Obj. 1.5) was developed based on a recommendation from self-advocates who saw the need and benefits of preparing young adults with disabilities to provide direct supports to older individuals. Because of their recommendation and advocacy efforts, the CDD was able to receive funding to develop and implement the PATHS program. Moreover, individuals with DD and family members have served and will continue to serve as course or lesson instructors for the PATHS program.
- *Examine and advance professional practice, scholarship and policy that impacts the lives of people with developmental and other disabilities and their families.* The doctoral programs will engage in teaching and training that promotes evidence-based practices, disseminate research scholarships and innovative policies to impact the lives of people with disabilities and their families. This will be done through coursework, research activities, competency requirements,

and field-based work. The Master's program teaches students to use evidence-based practices. The PATHS program has impacted the lives of many individuals with DD by supporting them to gain employment and earn a decent wage that is above the minimal wage.

- *Be designed to advance an individual's academic or professional credentials.* The special education Master's program is designed to provide current special education teachers with advanced credentials to become instructional leaders. The doctoral programs are designed to offer advanced degrees for students to take university faculty or other leadership positions. The BCBA certificate program prepares students to obtain credentials for providing evidence-based practices in working with students with behavioral challenges.
- *Take place in an academic setting or program.* All the previously mentioned degree programs will take place in an academic program at Texas A&M University.
- *Reflect a mix of students and faculty from diverse academic disciplines/academic programs.* As can be seen in the above descriptions of objectives and activities (see also the five-year plan in **Appendix B**), CDD faculty and staff include individuals representing academic programs of special education, educational psychology, counseling psychology, research and measurement, and agriculture. CDD faculty has also collaborated with many other disciplines including business, engineering, and government.
- *Reflect a mix of cultures that reflect the diversity of the community.* Increasing student diversity is a goal for Texas A&M University, which recently updated its Vision 2020. One of the new goals in Vision 2020 is to increase racial diversity of students based on Texas demographics. The CDD and its partnering degree programs will work toward the university goal by increasing diversity for both Master's and doctoral students. In the next five years, the CDD will work with academic programs to increase its cultural diversity in terms of student and

faculty populations and course contents. Some specific actions will include targeting universities and school districts that are highly represented by individuals from diverse cultures to recruit Master's and doctoral students and hiring course instructors from diverse backgrounds. The CDD will also work with academic programs to make course contents reflect views and values of diverse cultures.

- *Lead to the awards of an academic degree, a professional certificate, or advanced academic credential.* Overall, all CDD pre-service training projects and activities will lead to the awards of an academic degree, a professional certificate, or advanced academic credentials. CDD core and affiliated faculty will be involved in teaching *discipline-specific courses of study*.

Description of the Core Curriculum (2 points)

The Interdisciplinary Pre-service Preparation instructional programs include the Master's program, the doctoral training programs, and the PATHS program (Obj. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 & 1.5).

Core curriculum of these programs will:

- *Incorporate cultural diversity and demonstrates cultural competence and prepare trainees to address the needs of individuals of developmental disabilities and their families in a culturally competent manner.* Doctoral students are required to take two to three courses that address cultural competence: "Bilingual Special Education," "Special Topics on Multicultural Special Education," and "Hispanic Bilingual Assessment and Monitoring." In addition, students are required to take 15 credit hours of competencies in research, service, field supervision and teaching. Students have opportunities to demonstrate their cultural competence in topics of research and in supervision. Students in the PATHS program are required to take coursework in person-centered thinking and communication skills with individuals from various cultural

backgrounds. They are also required to demonstrate that they can work with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds during practicum.

- *Prepare trainees to be active participants in research and dissemination efforts.* All doctoral students are required to take rigorous research methodology courses, actively participate in research projects, demonstrate research competencies, and disseminate research findings through publications and conference presentations. PATHS students are participants of research studies that examine the efficacy of the PATHS program.
- *Prepare trainees to be consumers of research as it informs practice and policy.* All trainees will be taught how to read and interpret research findings, identify and implement evidence-based practices, and analyze and implement policies related to education and services.

Efforts to Recruit Trainees in Disciplines Related to DD (2 points)

The CDD values interdisciplinary approaches to education and training in developmental disabilities and believes that the knowledge, experience, and viewpoints of students from disciplines related to DD enrich teaching, research, and the learning environment. These values and beliefs will be implemented in the recruitment of CDD trainees. In the past 10 years, the CDD long-term trainees included those from School Psychology, Counseling Psychology, and Special Education. Intermediate and short-term trainees included professionals and students from a wide range of disciplines, including social workers, rehabilitation counselors, nurses, self-advocates, speech language pathologists, etc. The CDD will continue to recruit trainees from disciplines related to DD. One particular effort will focus on increasing doctoral level trainees from various disciplines. To do so, the CDD Director, the Associate Director, and the Assistant Director for Training and Policy have met a few times and developed a plan for recruiting doctoral trainees from disciplines related to DD. As part of the plan, the CDD will start a new

objective in fall 2015 (Obj. 1.4) to provide research and service experiences to 6 doctoral level interdisciplinary trainees. These trainees will be recruited from education, psychology, assessment, research, health, and other disciplines through a selection process. Financial incentives (stipends) will be provided to these trainees to support their involvement in CDD activities. Specific recruitment effort will include: (a) request program faculty and doctoral advisors from related disciplines to encourage their students to apply for the CDD interdisciplinary trainee program; (b) encourage current trainees to reach out and recruit new trainees; (c) disseminate program information via website, elevator posting, and bulletin board posting; (d) distribute program information through student organizations; and (e) send recruitment emails through departmental graduate advisors. In addition, the CDD will create an interdisciplinary collaboration environment that values the contributions of trainees from diverse disciplines. Trainees will have opportunities to work as a multiple disciplinary team on various CDD projects.

Description of A Continuing Education Program (3 points)

The CDD's Continuing Education Program will be accomplished by three objectives. These objectives, along with some training activities in Goal 2 (e.g., Obj. 2.1 that provides CEUs to people who attend the TTC) include courses, seminars, and sessions that will (a) *serve to maintain professional credentials*, (b) *encourage professionals to expand their knowledge base and stay up-to-date on new developments*, and (c) *offer certificates of completion or CEUs*.

The CDD will partner with faculty in special education and educational psychology to provide a graduate certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis *to maintain professional credentials* (Obj. 1.6). This objective is currently in the CDD. It addresses the need for trained behavior support specialists in Texas and nationally as described earlier in the application. Students who

successfully complete the required five courses and three internship experiences (1,000 hours total) will be prepared to apply for national certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. A total of 60 students will be served through this program across the five years of the grant.

Over the five years of the grant, the CDD will implement two major objectives that will provide training, technical assistance, and support services to educators on evidence-based practices to *expand their knowledge base and stay up-to-date on new developments*. In fall 2015, the CDD will collaborate with an affiliated faculty to implement project “REACH: Rural Educators Assessing CHallenging behavior” (Obj. 1.7). The purpose of this project is to develop an interactive online professional development program to train rural educators to conduct high quality functional behavior assessments of challenging behaviors. An estimated 60 rural educators will be trained in Years 3 to 5. Another project that the CDD will implement is “STEP: Supporting Teachers in Evidence-based Practices” (Obj. 1.8). STEP is a partnership with Brazos Valley Community Action Agency. The overarching goal of STEP is to improve outcomes for young children placed at risk for school failure by providing teachers with the skills and supports needed to provide a loving, structured, and consistent educational classroom environment which promotes school readiness. To this end, STEP provides technical assistance and rigorous empirical research studies on the downward extension of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to early childhood settings. An estimated 1,000 children and 50 Head Start teachers will receive service from STEP in the next five years.

Active and Meaningful Roles of Individuals with DD and Families (2 points)

Self-advocates and families have been and will continue to be actively and meaningfully involved in all training objectives. They will serve as guest speakers for courses or lessons associated with Objectives 1.1 and 1.4. For example, students in the Master’s program are

required to take courses related to student self-determination and family support, and self-advocates and family members are integral to the delivery of these courses. Similarly, self-advocates and family members will serve as faculty in the core courses associated with the education and training of doctoral level interdisciplinary trainees (Obj. 1.4).

The PATHS program (Obj. 1.5) was developed based on a recommendation from self-advocates who saw the need and benefits of preparing young adults with disabilities to provide direct support to older individuals who have support needs. Because of their recommendation and advocacy efforts, the CDD was able to receive funding from the state rehabilitation agency to develop and implement the PATHS program. Several individuals with DD and family members of individuals with DD have served and will continue to serve as course or lesson instructors for the PATHS program. The lessons that they will teach include person centered thinking, wraparound team meetings, and understanding individuals who have support needs.

Participation in Broader University Academic Programs (1 point)

Texas A&M University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication, and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields. Its mission of providing the highest quality undergraduate and graduate programs is inseparable from its mission of developing new understandings through research and creativity. The CDD participates in the broader university academic programs by discovering and applying new knowledge, by jointly offering graduate programs with academic programs, by teaching courses in the university academic programs through affiliated faculty, and by training doctoral trainees. CDD affiliated faculty teach courses that will be taken by students from different academic programs and participate in university and college academic committees to set and implement academic policies. The CDD also provides training to university academic communities on

disability awareness and effective instructional strategies for teaching students with disabilities. In addition, the CDD will continue to work with student organizations to engage in activities that train college students who would be future leaders to understand disability issues.

Descriptions of Community Services Activities (2 points)

As can be seen in **Table 2** in **Appendix B**, the CDD's efforts in the Community Services, Training, and Technical Assistance area will be accomplished through eight major objectives. CDD staff will continue to partner with the Texas Education Agency and regional/local education agencies to conduct the annual Texas Transition Conference (Obj. 2.1). This annual conference is held in February each year and provides information on national issues and evidence-based practices on the school to community transition process for educators, adult service personnel (e.g., vocational rehabilitation), parents, and adolescents with disabilities. Through this conference we expect to provide 2,500 individuals with evidence-based information on a variety of disability and transition issues over the five years of the grant.

Through Objective 2.2, the CDD will implement a new project titled "Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP)" in fall 2015. LEAP will provide high school youth with disabilities with training on self-determination, goal setting, employability, advocacy, and leadership skills. This project will be supported by a contract from Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). A total of 120 youth will receive training in the five years from 2015 to 2020.

Through Objective 2.3, the CDD will continue to implement Project GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). This was a federally funded project from the U.S. Department of Education in the past and is now supported by funds from Texas A&M University. Approximately 1,500 students, family members, and school staff will be

trained. The purpose of GEAR UP is to increase school completion and postsecondary attendance rates for underrepresented students, including students with disabilities, ethnically and linguistically diverse students, and first generation students. This project involves extensive school and community collaborations, including systematic outreach and collaboration with Hispanic and African American families through parent liaisons and partnerships with local businesses and faith communities.

As stated in the previous section regarding needs of the state, Texas has a huge need for person centered planning training. To address this need, the CDD will provide person centered training to 500 individuals in the next five years (Obj. 2.4). The training will be provided through the Institute for Person Centered Practice, which is a collaborative effort with the Texas Center for Disability Studies (the other UCEDD in Texas). The training will target service providers from several state agencies, individuals with disabilities, and family members. In addition, 20 individuals who receive the basic training will become certified trainers.

Through Objective 2.5, the CDD will develop Academy for Direct Support Professionals (the Academy), which is a joint effort with the other UCEDD in Texas. The Academy is an accredited program by the National Association of Direct Support Professionals. In the next five years, the Academy will certify 90 direct support professionals.

The CDD will continue to implement *Texas AgrAbility*, a federally funded project from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Obj. 2.6). *Texas AgrAbility* is a statewide resource for Texas and provides customized assessment, training, and technical assistance related to farm equipment adaptation, home modifications, and adaptive equipment in order to help farmers/ranchers with disabilities and their families remain engaged in production agriculture. Approximately 1,500 agricultural workers with disabilities and families will benefit from this project.

Through Objective 2.7, the CDD will continue to implement three outreach efforts by partnering with local and state organizations. These efforts include outreach to families by the CDD, the Texas Autism Collaborative, and the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCIL). Through these collaborations and outreach efforts, the CDD ensures its efforts are directly connected to the education, community inclusion, and family support issues identified by self-advocates and family members. The CDD will provide exemplary community services and training to be implemented in full partnership with self-advocates and family members.

The CDD will use a family network established through a former entity (i.e., Family Support Network) to provide materials, training, and technical assistance to empower parents in the public education process, including during the development and annual review of the IEP, the transition into public education, and the transition from school to adult life (Activity 2.7.1). The CDD will also distribute an e-newsletter that compiles information and resources for parents. Some specific activities include collaborating with two local school districts to organize an annual transition/resource fair, collaborating with local support groups to do presentations, and providing technical assistance via phone calls and emails every week about service and support questions that families have.

The Texas Autism Collaborative is currently part of the CDD and will continue in the next five-year grant cycle (Activity 2.7.2). It comprises of a series of projects to advance the understanding of and services provided to children with autism spectrum disorder to address several critical needs identified by parents/family members of individuals with autism spectrum disorders in the Brazos Valley and as identified in the Texas State Plan (2010-2014) for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Among the most critical needs both locally and statewide is the need for accurate early diagnosis and intensive intervention services (during ages

2-5 prior to participation in a public school program). Parents in the Brazos Valley (the 7 counties surrounding the CDD and TAMU) report having to drive two hours to Houston for assessment services and often having to wait several months for an appointment. In the past five years, an Autism Clinic has been established and has provided early diagnosis and intervention services to families in the Brazos Valley. In addition to the clinic, students interested in earning their BCBA have participated in practicum through the Texas Autism Collaborative. Research on core features of autism has also been conducted. In the next five years, these activities will continue to promote outreach to local families affected by autism, provide hands on learning for undergraduate and graduate students regarding autism and ABA, facilitate student-led intervention research under faculty supervision, and engage in faculty-led intervention research.

The CDD has partnered with BVCIL to provide outreach to individuals with disabilities and their families about living options and provide independent living skills training. Over the next five years, the CDD will continue to partner with BVCIL to serve the needs of self-advocates throughout the Brazos Valley (Activity 2.7.3). Through the partnership, the CDD will provide training, technical assistance, and information on issues related to community quality of life, including issues such as meaningful productive activity (employment, continuing education, volunteering activities), inclusive social recreational activities, housing/transportation, and healthy relationships.

Finally, the CDD will add a new project in fall 2015 to provide professional development training to 300 healthcare professionals in rural Texas (Obj. 2.8) in the next five years. It will be a partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services through the Optimizing Children's Mental Health Rural Positive Behavior Support Project, a grant funded by the U.S. Department

of Agriculture. The focus of the training will be on evidence-based practice for supporting optimal mental health services to children in childcare settings.

Community Services Offer Innovative Designs and Methods (5 points)

As described in more details in the above section, the eight objectives in community services offer innovative designs and methods that address each of the six bullet points in this review criterion. The work of the CDD is focused on promoting inclusive schools and communities, improving education and quality of life outcomes, and creating better lives for people with disabilities and their families. Objectives and project activities under Goal 2 include innovative designs and methods that promote inclusive education and integration of individuals with disabilities in the community. To do so, the CDD will target students of various ages, family members, educators, and adult agency personnel in its training activities so that all parties are trained to engage in practices that promote inclusion and integration into the community. Some of the trainings are especially designed for educational professionals. For example, the CDD will provide training to middle and high school teachers and staff teachers to increase the school completion and postsecondary attendance rates of underrepresented students, including students with disabilities, ethnically and linguistically diverse students, and first generation students (Obj. 2.3). To help youth with disabilities make successful transition to adult life in the community, the CDD will train transition professionals to help youth with disabilities prepare for life after school in the community (Obj. 2.1), train youth with disabilities and their families to exercise self-advocacy, leadership and employability skills so that they can work and live in the community (Obj. 2.2), and train health professionals to provide adequate services and support to individuals with disabilities for living in the community (Obj. 2.8). In addition, through a partnership with BVCIL, the CDD will provide an array of training and support for individuals

with disabilities to live in the community (Obj. 2.7). Moreover, the CDD will provide training to farmers and ranchers with disabilities to work and live in their home community (Obj. 2.6). With this wide range of activities that target individuals with disabilities at various ages, family members, educators, and service professionals, the CDD will be able to promote inclusive education for students and inclusive work and living opportunities for adults with disabilities.

Strategies that promote increased and meaningful opportunities for individuals with DD and family members, including individuals from ethnically/linguistically diverse backgrounds, are an integral part of all objectives in this core function. Individuals with DD and their families who represent diverse groups have been active participants of CDD and affiliated project activities. For example, self-advocates and family members have been involved in the identification of key topics for the TTC and served as both session presenters as well as keynote presenters (Obj. 2.1). The GEAR UP project (Obj. 2.3) targets students with disabilities and those from ethnically/linguistically diverse backgrounds. The project hires parent liaisons in each school, the majority of whom are African American or Hispanic parents. The project includes extensive partnerships with ethnically diverse communities, including faith communities. The outreach entities -- the Texas Autism Collaborative and the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living -- have strong outreach components to underserved rural communities and to Spanish speaking families, drawing upon the expertise of bilingual CDD staff.

Description of Community Services T/TA Activities (2 points)

Most of the CDD activities in the eight objectives under Community Services (as described above) offer community services as well as training and technical assistance (T/TA) activities. It is difficult to divide these activities into either community services or T/TA activities. However, several objectives have more T/TA activities. For example, the annual Texas

Transition Conference (Obj. 2.1) offers training on knowledge and evidence-based practices on secondary transition. The “Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP)” will provide training to high school students on advocacy and leadership skills training (Obj. 2.2). Similarly, DEAR UP (Objective 2.3) project provides training to school personnel and parents about preparing students with and without disabilities to pursue postsecondary education. The Institute for Person Centered Practice will provide person centered training to a wide range of state agency staff, service providers, and families about person centered thinking and plan facilitation (Obj. 2.4). The *Texas AgrAbility* project will provide T/TA and support services to 1,500 farmers/ranchers with disabilities and their families to help them remain engaged in production agriculture (Obj. 2.6). In addition, through three different sets of activities, the CDD will provide T/TA and support services to 2,500 individuals with disabilities and their families to support and empower self-advocates and families and to promote quality, inclusive schools and communities (Obj. 2.7).

Description of Community Services Demonstration Activities (1 point)

Five of the CDD’s Community Services objectives include new projects or activities that are innovative and serve as demonstration activities. Through Objective 2.2, the CDD will implement a new project titled “Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP)” to provide high school youth with disabilities with training on self-determination, goal setting, employability, advocacy, and leadership skills. The CDD will develop Academy for Direct Support Professionals (the Academy) that will certify 90 direct support professionals in the next five years (Obj. 2.5). In addition, the CDD will add a new demonstration project in fall 2015 to provide professional development training to healthcare professionals in rural Texas (Obj. 2.8) and 300 people will be trained in the next five years. Finally, two activities under Goal 1 also

include Community Services demonstration activities. The first is Activity 1.5.5, which will be a newly added childcare focus in the PATHS program designed to train individuals with and without disabilities to provide childcare services. The other is activity 1.7.3, which is a new demonstration project that will train rural educators to conduct high quality functional behavior assessments of challenging behaviors. More information about these objectives is provided in the previous sections of this application.

Description of the Research Program (4 points)

As can be seen in **Table 2, Appendix B**, the CDD's research efforts will be accomplished through six major objectives. Through Objectives 3.1 and 3.2, the CDD will continue and extend its line of research examining effective practices for teaching early literacy skills to young children and adolescents with or at risk of reading difficulties, with an emphasis on identifying evidence-based practices for young children from ethnically/linguistically diverse backgrounds. This line of research consists of several externally funded grants from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences (IES). Project ELM (Early Literacy Measurement) is a project currently with the CDD and will continue in the next funding cycle. It evaluates the technical adequacy of measures for monitoring progress of kindergarten students at risk for reading disabilities. Project IVCS (Integrating Vocabulary and comprehension Software) is a new project and will iteratively develop a vocabulary of comprehension intervention for third grade students at-risk for reading failure. The study will involve multiple cycles of design and development, instructional trials, usability and feasibility studies, and revisions to the intervention in the next three years. Project PACT (Promoting Adolescent comprehension of Text) is currently in the CDD and will continue. It investigates reading comprehension in

adolescents. In addition to these IES funded grants, additional grant proposals have been submitted to various funding sources and are currently under review.

Through Objective 3.3, CDD core and affiliated faculty and staff will conduct two related lines of research to identify effective practices to improve academic, socio-behavioral, and postsecondary outcomes for students with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities. The first line of research will include a series of intervention studies to improve academic, socio-behavioral, and communication skills and outcomes for young children and students with autism and with severe behavioral challenges. These studies will be conducted in partnership with public schools and with the Texas Autism Collaborative described in the preceding section, and will address key issues in Texas and nationally for children with severe behavior challenges and their families. Many of these studies will use single case experimental designs that permit the identification of causal relationships and thus stronger evidence about interventions that make a positive difference. The CDD will seek external grants to support this line of research.

The second line of research under Objective 3.3 will investigate factors associated with positive academic, behavioral, and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities by field-based research, meta-analyses or systematic review of the literature, and analyses of extant databases.

Through Objective 3.4, the CDD will continue and extend its line of research and evaluation studies on the effects of disasters on individuals with disabilities. This line of research has included studies on the effectiveness and responsiveness of emergency/disaster preparedness and recovery procedures in meeting the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Studies in this line of research have used a variety of research approaches that range from quantitative analysis of extant datasets and qualitative interviews with individuals with disabilities who have

been displaced by disasters. Specific disaster-related studies have been conducted with survivors of Hurricanes Ike, Rita and Katrina; the Bastrop County Complex Wildfire, and the Great Midwestern Floods. Findings from this line of research will continue to be disseminated broadly to research, policy, and practitioner audiences through products, publications, presentations.

Through Objective 3.5, the CDD will continue and extend its line of research to examine the effects of participation in a career-focused inclusive postsecondary education program. In the past two years, this line of research has produced some preliminary data that show positive impact of this postsecondary education program on employment and earning outcomes. For example, follow-up and case studies with former students of the PATHS program revealed that those who graduated from the PATHS program were employed and earned a living wage that is better than the minimal wage. More longitudinal research will be conducted to examine long-term employment and independent living outcomes.

The CDD will design and implement a line of research that examines the effectiveness of self-determination, leadership, and employability skills training on the employment and independent living outcomes of youth who receive these trainings (Obj. 3.6). This is a new line of research that will be supported by funding from the state rehabilitation agency. Quasi-experimental designs with pre- and post-tests will be implemented to help draw empirical conclusions.

Active Participation in Research by People with DD and Families (2 points)

Self-advocates and family members will continue to be involved in the design and conduct of the CDD's research program. For example, Spanish speaking parents will be involved in field-tests of curricula designed to teach early literacy skills to young children from ethnically/linguistically diverse backgrounds (Objective 3.1). Similarly, representatives from

parent groups will be involved in developing research questions, conducting focus groups, and reviewing findings from the studies under Objective 3.4. In addition, to ensure the needs of Spanish speaking parents are addressed, all questions and data collection instruments will be developed in Spanish, and during the focus groups bilingual CDD staff will be present to facilitate the participation of Spanish speaking parents. Some focus groups (especially those in the South Texas region in proximity to the border with Mexico) will be conducted entirely in Spanish. The CDD will continue to incorporate self-advocates and family members in all other research and evaluation studies across the next five years of the grant.

Description of An Information Dissemination Plan (5 points)

As can be seen in **Table 2, Appendix B**, the CDD's information dissemination efforts will be accomplished through three major objectives. Through Objective 4.1, the CDD will engage in an array of strategies to disseminate the CDD's work broadly to constituents locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally. First, the CDD will utilize a variety of web-based strategies including an active website, electronic newsletters, and several social media (e.g., Facebook and twitter). The CDD's Communication Specialist, Ms. Tanya Baker, updates the CDD's website weekly with news and information. These updates and other news are communicated through Facebook, twitter, and other social media. The CDD distributes a monthly e-newsletter to a broad subscriber base. Some projects within the CDD also have e-newsletters. Second, CDD staff will be active in translating research findings into products, publications, and presentations. On average, in each of the past five years, CDD staff have developed and disseminated 50 products and publications (both peer-refereed and non-refereed) and developed and delivered 35 presentations at local, state, national and international levels, including peer-refereed national and international presentations. Over the next five years of the

grant, and across all dissemination strategies that will be employed through Objective 4.1, the CDD is targeting no fewer than 500,000 total dissemination contacts.

Through Objective 4.2, the CDD will partner with Texas AgriLife Extension Service to operate the Career and Technical Special Populations Training and Resource Center (CTSP Center). The CTSP Center is an externally funded clearinghouse that provides resources and training for educators and parents in order to increase access, retention, and success in career and technical education programs for students with disabilities and other special needs. The CTSP Center develops and disseminates print, media, and online resources, including multimedia online training modules, and provides training materials and workshops to educators and parents. Materials are specifically developed for parents. Over the five years of the grant, and across all dissemination strategies that will be employed, the CTSP is targeting no fewer than 300,000 total dissemination contacts.

Finally, through Objective 4.3, the CDD will engage in specific activities to educate and disseminate information to state legislators and members of Congress. The CDD will accomplish these activities through collaboration with the state's DD partners and through membership and leadership in the Texas Disability Policy Consortium (DPC). The DPC is an independent group of 25 statewide health and disability advocacy organizations committed to promoting the rights, inclusion, and independence of Texans with disabilities. Dr. Amy Sharp, the CDD's Associate Director who acts as a public policy liaison, is actively involved in the development of policy and position papers that are disseminated to state legislators and members of Congress.

Universal Design, Multiple Formats, Person First/Centered, & Positive Image (4 points)

The CDD is committed to using principles of universal design and accessibility across all information dissemination activities. The three primary principles that guide universal design for

learning are (a) provide multiple means of representation, (b) provide multiple means of action and expression, and (c) provide multiple means of engagement (CAST, 2011). Based on these guidelines, the CDD has developed dissemination materials in various formats, including professionally designed brochures, flyers, pamphlets, executive summaries, monographs, journal articles, and book chapters. Most of these materials are also included on the CDD website and project websites. To meet the needs of individuals with varied abilities, the materials are designed with key information not affected by graphics. Depending on the type of materials, some were translated into Spanish. In addition, CDD faculty and staff are trained with the guidelines so that they use the principles of universal design for learning when providing classroom instruction and training or doing a presentation. Training materials are provided in various formats in addition to PowerPoint presentations.

Because websites have become the primary means for information dissemination, the CDD has made investments for the CDD's Communication Specialist, Ms. Tanya Baker, to receive a series of training on best and evidence-based practices for enhancing accessibility of CDD and project websites and dissemination materials. These trainings include website accessibility seminars, intensive WebAIM Web Accessibility Training, principles of web accessibility, how assistive technologies work and how to evaluate the accessibility of a website, and web accessibility standards updates. Based on information obtained from the trainings, the CDD revisited the design and content of its websites to make them fully accessible based on Priority AA guidelines. Redesigning the site template and restoring an airy, uncluttered home page were essential steps toward a more evolved site that keeps diverse users in mind. Each page within the site has a predictable two-column structure with main navigation at the top and key contact information in the footer. All pages have been evaluated under the W3C's POUR criteria

(perceivable, operable, understandable and robust), which embraces universal design as best practice for websites. In addition, the CDD has made intentional efforts to caption all videos on the CDD or affiliated project websites, in addition to providing downloadable transcripts of the audio. Documents on the website likewise are in compliance and can be accessed well by screen readers. Every image on the website has been assigned an “alt” tag to give the screen reader information on what the image is and/or its significance on the page. Finally, when special requests are made, large-format versions of any documents on the website or disseminated at conferences and workshops are accommodated.

The CDD has adopted person centered practices and person first language. CDD projects have used person centered practice to guide their services. For example, the PATHS program organizes one or more person centered planning meeting(s) for every student admitted to the program. During the meeting(s), the student, family members, friends, and professionals utilize person centered practice to develop a plan for the student. The CDD also serves as a leader in promoting person centered practices and has provided person centered training across Texas in the past four years. Through the Institute for Person Centered Practices, the CDD will continue to provide training to thousands of individuals about person centered thinking in the next five years. When developing products, CDD staff always use person first languages.

The CDD always promotes positive images of individuals with DD. In the past years, the CDD has published various materials to highlight the successes of individuals with DD. For example, the PATHS program produced a publication titled “The New Professionals” that highlights the stories of five individuals who graduated from the program. This publication has been widely distributed to many service providers. In the next five years, the CDD will continue to highlight successful stories of individuals with DD and disseminate these stories through

websites, journals, newsletters, flyers, videos, and other formats to federal and state legislators, stakeholders, families, and others to promote the positive images of individuals with DD.